Fortified Settlements in Early Medieval Europe

Christie, Neil; Herold, Hajnalka;

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Defended Communities of the 8th–10th Centuries

Edited by

Neil Christie and Hajnalka Herold

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NEIL CHRISTIE & HAJNALKA HEROLD

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Front cover: Clockwise from left: computer-generated model of Gars-Thunau; Segesta *(Gianni Gervasi)*; Bullcroft, Wallingford *(Neil Christie)*; Cahergal cashel, Co. Kerry *(Michelle Comber)*.

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Acknowledgements

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Contributors to this present volume have been patient with the editors in preparation and pursuit of the final product: all have responded promptly to requests for and queries on their papers, and for revisions following edits and reviews. In particular many thanks are extended to the various efficient peer reviewers of the articles presented here; these scholars helped considerably in reporting on the quality and depth of the contributions, enabling important revisions to be made in some instances. The volume is thus much enriched by their assistance – and while we would like to name them all, sadly anonymity must remain!

Finally, at Oxbow Books, we must first thank commissioning editor Clare Litt for seeing the importance of our theme and recognising the rich set of articles it attracted; and second, for guidance in production and copy editing of the volume, we are very grateful to Julie Gardiner, Katie Gabriel Allen, Hannah McAdams and Mette Bundgaard.

Neil Christie & Hajnalka Herold

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Introduction

Defining and Understanding Defended Settlements in Early Medieval Europe: Structures, Roles, Landscapes and Communities

Neil Christie & Hajnalka Herold

Background

This volume brings together experts from across Europe working on shared themes related to early medieval settlement. Centring discussion on three core centuries of the Early Middle Ages – the 8th–10th centuries AD – the contributors here examine the phenomenon of fortified settlements in the landscape. The period is, arguably, one dominated by enclosed communities – even if, as will be highlighted by various authors, 'open' and 'dispersed' settlement persisted in the lands attached to or overseen by the fortified centres. These sites have long been portrayed as physical, monumental and landed manifestations of fractured states, high levels of warfare – external and internecine – and a growing localisation of elite power. They have also long seen historical recognition and archaeological investigation, but generally with a focus determined by the noted vision of insecurity. Hence the emphasis of study had long been on the defences – stone or timber and earthen – and their scale and durability; on the strategic siting of the fortifications – on hilltop, island, promontory, or as citadel or urban enceinte – and their position in a defensive network; and on signs of military garrisons, of conflict and of destruction. Their role in state authority and in elite society are also regular subjects of discussion – frontier bases to a polity; fortified royal palaces; high elite strongholds, perhaps held by royal retainers

or administrators such as dukes, counts, margraves; or fortresses between competing nobilities.

But while these are all factors that played a role – substantial or lesser – in the formation, functioning, evolution and ends (or endurance) of fortified sites across Europe, discussion of these distinctive and commonplace settlement foci needs better balance, addressing not just their potential politico-military roots and roles, but also their actual workings as settlements. Archaeology is ideally placed to explore not just chronologies and forms, but the occupants, their lifestyles, material expressions, their contacts and their working landscapes. As will be seen, this volume is as much about understanding how, when and why these fortified sites emerged in the Early Middle Ages as understanding how they were put together, the nature of their buildings inside and what we can learn of the social groups living and working within (and without) them.

The papers presented here draw fully from two conferences organised by the editors and held in the UK on the core theme of this volume. The first event was a weekend conference on *'Early Medieval Defended Communities across Europe: Fortified Settlements of the 8th to 10th Centuries AD'*, held from Friday 8th to Sunday 10th February 2013 in the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education. The conference asked of its speakers the following questions: 'Were defended communities typical in the Early Middle Ages? How far was there a direct continuity from late Roman into early medieval in terms of hilltop villages and fortified sites? What new sites emerged and why? Who controlled these sites? How 'feudal' were the landscapes of 8th- to 10th-century Europe? Furthermore, how developed is our understanding of these sites, in terms of how they were articulated and designed, their contents in terms of populations and structures, and their role in the landscape'.

Our second discussion venue that year was the International Medieval Congress 2013 held at the University of Leeds for which the editors organised three sessions on *'Defended Communities': Fortified Settlements of the 8th–10th Centuries – Origins, Forms, and Functions'* (all held on 4th July, 2013). Here the remit was to compare and assess 'the archaeology of fortified settlements across Europe, beyond the scope of regions that are usually compared and studied together. By analysing the origins, forms and functions of these settlements,

similarities and differences will be discussed in the development of European regions in the late phase of the Early Middle Ages'.

We are hugely grateful that nearly all of the speakers from the two 2013 conferences have contributed their knowledge to this volume; we have expanded the coverage further by including additional experts so as to ensure as strong a geographical spread as possible. As might be anticipated, achieving a complete coverage of the entire European area did not prove possible, but we nonetheless extend from north-west Europe, the Baltic Sea region, to the Mediterranean and across to the Black Sea. Our line-up is, accordingly, substantial and comprises both established and younger scholars, the majority of whom are able to draw directly on their own field experience of relevant sites and landscapes, or are experts on archival and other related data. The volume especially puts actual sites first; as will be seen, case studies are core to most papers.

This volume is timely also given a growing, wider academic interest in this crucial, transitional timeframe in Europe. Recent publications include John Baker, Stuart Brookes and Andrew Reynolds (eds), *Landscapes of Defence in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2013), which explicitly sought to engage a wide breadth of scholars (archaeologists, historians, place-name experts) in looking at trends in settlement forms and landscape responses to the insecurities of the Viking Age: important papers were offered on *burh*-building, civil defence measures, dyke-building, river control, as well as place-names and terminologies. The conference from which this volume derived formed part of the Leverhulme Trust-funded *'Beyond the Burghal Hidage: Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age'* project (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/burghalhidage), directed by Andrew Reynolds and David Parsons, whose principal output was the monograph of the same name by Stuart Brookes and John Baker (Leiden, 2013). Chris Loveluck's *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages. c. AD 600–1150. A Comparative Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2014) is a very recent publication of high significance that directly seeks to link and compare regions (his geographical emphasis is Britain, France and Belgium), forms and trends; his chapters 10–12 in particular explore architecture of public power, new aristocracies in the landscape and evolving rural mobility and land organisation.

Looking eastwards, two other volumes stand out: first, Joachim Henning's edited volumes on *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium, Vol. 1: The Heirs of the Roman West; Vol. 2: Byzantium, Pliska, and the Balkans* (Berlin and New York, 2007) and *Frühgeschichtliche Zentralorte in Mitteleuropa* (Bonn, 2011) edited by J. Macháček and Š. Ungerman. Key efforts in the two impressive volumes of *Post-Roman Towns*, deriving from two conferences organised by the J. W. Goethe University (Frankfurt am Main, Germany), were to give overviews of the various forms of urban and attached rural development across western and central Europe (Vol. 1) as well as in the Byzantine and Bulgarian areas (Vol. 2); by presenting most of the papers in English, this publication has made accessible in a concentrated form to an international audience research results from various areas of Europe, many of which are generally difficult to study without knowledge of the local language. The volume *Frühgeschichtliche Zentralorte* draws from a conference that marked the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the excavations at the site of Břeclav-Pohansko in the Czech Republic. In addition to detailed studies on this site, the book concentrates on central Europe, primarily the areas of the present Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Germany and Poland, with major case studies offered, and in many instances authors presented essential updates to published research.

And there are other studies that have a tighter geographical focus, but which enable fuller assessments of sequences and structures in specific countries than offered in the snapshot papers presented here in our own volume: prominent titles include J. A. Quirós Castillo and J. M. Tejado Sebastián (eds), *Los castillos altomedievales en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica* (Bilbao, 2012), and the proceedings of the conference held at Scarlino in central Italy in April 2011 on *'Fortificazioni di terra in Italia. Motte, tumuli, tumbe, recincti'*, edited by Aldo Settia and published within the journal *Archeologia Medievale*, XL, 2013, 7–187 – with this and many comparable European medieval-oriented journals of course frequently presenting relevant excavation reports and surveys on early to late medieval fortified sites. And prominent for Ireland, borne out of the notable *Early Medieval Archaeology Project* (EMAP), which assembled and examined archaeological data acquired through excavation across Ireland, from the 1930s to 2008, and with over 240 relevant sites explored, is *Early*

Medieval Ireland, AD 400–1100. The Evidence from Archaeological Excavations, by Aidan O'Sullivan, Finbar McCormick, Thomas R Kerr and Lorcan Harney (Dublin, 2013). Chapters include settlement forms, farming (with a general conclusion that, despite much enclosure, the landscape was overall fairly 'open') and crafts. It is supported further by the volume by Finbar McCormick, Thomas R Kerr, Meriel McClatchie and Aidan O'Sullivan, *Early Medieval Agriculture, Livestock and Cereal Production in Ireland, AD 400–1100* (British Archaeological Reports International Series 2647. Oxford, 2014). Such coverage is hugely impressive and offers models of synthesis and analysis to be pursued elsewhere.

Two recent volumes with a tight geographical focus should be mentioned from east-central Europe: *Great Moravia and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Brno, 2015), edited by P. Kouřil, which constitutes the catalogue of the exhibition of the same name and shown in Brno, Prague and Bratislava. In addition to a number of essays on general themes related to 'Great Moravia', the volume presents overviews on the archaeology of most known 9th- and 10th-century fortified centres from Moravia and Bohemia (the eastern and the western part of today's Czech Republic) and Slovakia, as well as on the important sites of Zalavár in Hungary and Gars-Thunau in Austria. The volume of essays *'Castellum, civitas, urbs' – Centres and Elites in Early Medieval East-Central Europe* (Leipzig and Budapest, 2015), edited by O. Heinrich-Tamáska, H. Herold, P. Straub and T. Vida, meanwhile addresses the study of early medieval elites in a wider framework, including – in addition to studies on fortified sites – papers on settlement continuity between the Roman and the early medieval period, as well as on settlement networks and the material culture of early medieval elites in east-central Europe.

While many of the above works synthesise investigations at an array of sites, it is important also to observe the value of extended site-specific projects. Indeed, a number of substantial field projects centred on fortified sites have been active and some recently published – including, for example, excavations and surveys at the late Anglo-Saxon *burh* and Norman castle site of Wallingford in Oxfordshire in southern England (N. Christie and O. Creighton, with H. Hamerow and M. Edgeworth, *Transforming Townscapes. From Burh to Borough: The Archaeology of Wallingford, AD 800–1400,* London,

2013) or the major central Italian project at the castle and village complex of Miranduolo (see the extensive archive and data resources at http://archeologiamedievale.unisi.it/miranduolo/). In addition, some important older excavation projects have come to print, notably the 1945–52 excavations at the late 10th-century Viking fortress of Aggersborg in Jutland – E. Roesdahl, S. Sindbæk, A. Pedersen and D. M. Wilson (eds), *Aggersborg. The Viking-Age Settlement and Fortress* (Højbjerg, 2014), while in east-central Europe, the results of extensive excavations of 1999–2001 at a Slavic defended settlement have been published by Sebastian Messal as *Glienke. Eine slawische Burg des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts im östlichen Mecklenburg* (Wiesbaden, 2015). The contributors to this current volume will themselves be exploiting many key sites but will draw equally on lesser-known sites and complexes to give depth to their regional or thematic surveys.

Themes and Issues

A series of common threads will arise from the papers presented in this volume and while it is essential to explore each of the contributions for commentaries on sources, debates, strengths and weaknesses in the data available, etc., below we outline some of the main themes and issues and note some of the main contributors to these. In brief, we would identify five main aspects of ongoing debate: site types and definitions; landscapes or geographies of power; landscape impacts; workforces and residents; and qualities of the archaeological evidence.

Site Types and Definitions

This volume is not just (but it could have been) about castles (or their formation) but instead it is exploring fortified settlements of diverse types, scale and trajectory: from substantial urban entities of Roman origin in early medieval Italy and newly founded urban fortresses in late Anglo-Saxon England or in the Papal State of the 9th century, to Carolingian forts and palaces in Frankia and its provinces, to Slavic strongholds and Danish fort-encampments, to defended rural refuges and lordly estates, to enclosed rural farmsteads and to fortified monasteries and island retreats.

But the labels we apply to these defended sites is, arguably,

problematic or, rather, not clear-cut. For example, as **Urbańczyk** points out, in Poland the term applied to early medieval enclosed or defended sites has long been *gród*, which is generally translated as 'stronghold' – the term in modern usage implies a military fortress – as often assumed when the label 'castle' is applied to a fortified site. Similarly Urbańczyk identifies how the mid-9th-century source of the *Bavarian Geographer* lists tribal names alongside a given number of unnamed *civitates*, where the latter term is left unspecified – interpreted too often as 'strongholds' in the context of emergent Polish polities, it is an ancient term which evolved in the Early Middle Ages to mean anything from a town and territory to a region and even principality. In the case of the Catalonian site of L'Esquerda, **Ollich *et al***. identify the excavated defended settlement as *Roda civitas* – a Carolingian frontier fort and district – recorded also as a *castellum*. And in south-west Scotland, the power centre of Dumbarton Rock was described by Bede in the 8th century as *civitas munitissima Brettonum quae vocatur Alcluith* and *urbs Alcluith* – thus a site which equates with both *urbs* and *civitas*, but with the emphasis very much on its strong defences (**Noble**).

In early medieval Italy the terms *castrum* and *castellum* vary in meaning and scope: in the late Roman period, both bear official military connotations, with the former a large military installation; by the 6th century, *castrum* is applied equally to a fortified town, or sometimes a citadel within a town, but also to a larger fortified site in the landscape; *castella* remain smaller defended units, but could be civilian or military, urban, rural, refuge, etc. **Citter** identifies how for Central Italy terms such as *castrum* and *civitas* can be synomymous; at the same time, an old city could contain a defended core or citadel, such as the *castrum aprutiense* at Teramo, while Chieti seemingly had two *castra*, which came to be enclosed within one circuit in the 9th century. In contrast, the mid-9th-century papal fortress established at Cencelle was glorified with the name *Leopolis*, registering its urban rather than military status as a *polis* (as with *Gregoriopolis* at the decayed Ostia), even though the most prominent built feature were its defensive walls.

For the Low Countries, on the north-western frontiers of the Carolingian realm we can look to a potentially more explicit range of (official) titles to sites – thus we hear in royal documentation of

praesidia (small defensive structures, perhaps towers), *custodia maritime* (coastal guard-points), plus *castella* (forts) (**Tys *et al.***). Carolingian Istria, meanwhile, shows far less variety, based on the AD 804 'Plea of Rižana', labelling a majority as *castella* (**Jurković**). In central Europe, the few available written sources from the 8th to 10th century mainly use the words *urbs* and *civitas*, with other labels, such as *castellum*, featuring less frequently; at present it is not possible to link specific types of archaeological sites to these (**Herold**). In contrast, in contemporary Wessex in southern England, a variety of names are applied by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and by sources such as Asser to defended sites and enclosures, such as *arx* (stronghold), *geweorc* (fortress, blocking fort), *castrum* (fortress), *fæsten* (fortification), *castellum* (fortification), plus *ham* and *burh* also for a defended site. Despite this variety – without clearly discernible hierarchies – the term *burh* is essentially applied to the network of defended sites, large and small, established by the Wessex royalty against Viking expansion (**Christie**; **Lavelle**). Of course, in and near the Byzantine realm, a set of Greek terms is used by the sources to label different types of settlements (**Gelichi**; **Kostova**; **Molinari**), while in Sicily also the contemporary Arabic terms need to be considered (**Molinari**).

More work needs to be undertaken to examine these labels and names and whether we can see in them actual differences between large, more urban defended communities and lesser, military bases or between monastic retreats and civilian refuges. We of course lack the names to huge numbers of these – in early medieval Ireland, for example, while for many the site name itself may not betray its defended status, we rely on labels attached by contemporary or later historians, chroniclers, clerics, etc. who might vary the label for literary purposes rather than through efforts to qualify them in official military parlance. (Although the application of the term *longphort* for a Viking raiding base seems to reflect an 'official' Scandinavian label to these often large defended enclosures – **O'Sullivan**.) An additional factor to consider for some regions, such as central Europe, is that the written sources of the 8th to 10th centuries were not produced locally. Thus, on the one hand, the clerics writing the texts had never seen the settlements they were writing about. And, on the other hand, they had a set of labels, mostly derived from the Roman period, for discussing

newly developing forms of settlements that did not necessarily have a predecessor in the Roman world. Therefore, especially in those parts of early medieval Europe which did not produce their own written sources, we have to see the labels used for settlements as the 'best compromise' that the external clerics and scribes were able to apply based on the information available to them.

Furthermore, as work by David Parsons and John Baker for later Anglo-Saxon England has shown, some 'military-style' names might be adopted for/applied to sites that had no obvious military role: thus the civilian landscape could apply terms like *fæsten* to an animal enclosure and so might be referencing 'secure' spaces, not necessarily 'strong' ones. Indeed, as some authors in this volume identify, while we often focus on larger defended and seemingly powerful sites (see **Fronza** on types and scales in central Italy), there may be a problem with our labelling of and terminology for the walls at the sites. Should these all be necessarily defined as 'defences' or 'curtain/circuit walls' or 'ramparts'? The massive thick timber-and-earth walls of Slavic strongholds should indeed represent 'defensive roles' (**Biermann**; **Urbańczyk**; **Herold**), but part of that thickness is due to the materials employed. Some stonewalls were thick for stability on a hillslope (**Jurković**; **Kostova**), but walls in village sites in Tuscany, for example, were not necessarily thick, and lacked towers or impressive or even 'formal' gates (**Valenti**; **Fronza**). These walls were as often *defining* units not defensive – for defining the contained space of a controlled site; for keeping wild animals out; and for ensuring safe corralling of domesticated animals inside. Similarly, as **Comber** details, various of the cashels in early medieval Ireland were enclosed, but with walls and banks only between 1.0–2.0 m high, and thus hardly suggestive of any real 'defensive' role. In a society where cattle-owning was an index of wealth, the enclosures appear a logical agro-structural investment; upper-class cashels similarly have what might be claimed as fairly nominal 'defences' but stand out more in the 7th and 8th centuries in their overall size as enclosures; noticeably, when insecurity mounts with the rise in Viking threats in the 9th and 10th centuries, so the enclosing walls rise too (with a concomitant drop in the lower-ranking, more compact cashels).

Geographies of Power

As seen, some of the sites discussed in this volume are what might be termed 'military', being sites charged by a State with specific strategic roles – to defend frontiers such as for the Carolingians at *Roda civitas* in Iberia (**Ollich *et al.***), to defend the Byzantine Black Sea littoral or the Danube mouth **(Kostova**), to protect Byzantine towns and lands in Sicily against Arab intruders (**Molinari**), to guard monastic seats and lands from Hungarian incursions (**Boschetti**), to counter Viking raids on coasts and up rivers (**Lavelle** and **Tys *et al.***) or to defend State authority and lands in later 10th-century Denmark (**Pedersen**). Different may be the *longphuirt* in Ireland, where we are not wholly clear on whether the raiding forces were led by kings or chiefs or their strongmen; whichever the case, they denote expressions of a high militarised authority seeking to impose a State on foreign soil (**O'Sullivan**).

It seems evident that consistent dissemination of defended seats – the appearance of defended sites of specific types with evident strategic value – was therefore normally a reflection of State or royal initiatives or programmes: works under Louis the Pious in the Frankish northern and western frontiers (**Tys *et al.***); *burhs* in Wessex under Kings Alfred the Great and Edward the Elder between *c*. AD 870 and 915 (**Christie**); the Trelleborg-type fortresses in King Harald Bluetooth's Danish kingdom of the 960s–970s AD (**Pedersen**); and potentially anti-Hungarian defences initiated under Henry I in the 920s (**Boschetti**). In such cases, major programmes of defensive response and construction could only be generated through the mobilisation of resources on a substantial scale – through calls to arms, demands on legal dues, requisitions of materials, organisation of manpower to undertake engineering works at speed, etc. Thus the Edict of Pîtres issued by Charles the Bald in AD 864 stresses obligations to the Crown in the event of military campaigns – service, provision of horses, watch duty in forts and towns, building of new fortifications near rivers and points of transit (**Tys *et al.***; **Lavelle**).

Contemporary texts such as the Edict of Pîtres also support the perception that only the State could authorise construction of fortified sites. In the context of Harald Bluetooth's Denmark, it seems striking that, besides the Trelleborg forts and urban sites under royal control, the landscape is largely devoid of defended sites, with rural seats like Vorbasse and even manors lacking enclosing banks and with only

nominal fencing to define houses and properties. Potentially, the thinning out of defended sites in both Wales (**Seaman**) and Scotland (**Noble**) after the 7th century might imply that power was becoming more focussed on a smaller number of polities or kingdoms and that defensive expressions equated with this more focussed authority. In Arab Sicily, **Molinari** suggests a demographic loss at play in the 'reduced' settlement landscape of the 7th and 8th centuries AD; while more stable conditions and demographic growth are reflected in the much more 'open' settlement strategy of the 10th century. The contrast lies in landscapes where the defended or enclosed settlement had long currency and where scale and place are the markers of authority – but with that authority weak or localised: thus early medieval Ireland features a mass of ringworks, raths, cashels and crannogs which reveal banks and ditches as part of the architectural 'language' of settlement – especially in a landscape without towns and cities (**O'Sullivan**; **Comber**). Future targets, in various regions of Europe, may be to seek to map differing grades of sites and interrogate how they interrelated and how they might have interacted; building models of hierarchies will offer insights into social and territorial organisation across time. Of value in this regard are projects such as the ongoing fieldwork in the Caherconnell region of Co. Clare in western Ireland (**Comber**).

Emulation, both in the sense of imitation and competition, surely also played a role in the spread of fortified sites in various regions. Often seen as *imitatio imperii* on borders of the Carolingian realm, fortified sites could reflect not only the formation of similar social patterns in the border regions as within the Empire, but at the same time signify a 'fashion' in the display of status and power, which was copied by nearby polities in order to look more 'equal' with the Carolingian state. This was complemented by the use and imitation of elements of material culture from the Carolingian orbit; perhaps the adoption of Christianity – when it was not largely forced, as in the case of the Saxons – can likewise be seen to fit into this pattern of 'wanting to look and act in a similar way'. Of course, the Empire had various roles in relation to the smaller polities around its borders, being a stronger political unit to fight against, an ideal to copy and an occasional ally to join against other smaller polities. Many of the papers in this volume on continental Europe discuss Carolingian

border regions, and in the eastern parts also border regions of the Ottonian state (**Ollich *et al.***; **Tys. *et al.***; **Biermann**; **Urbańczyk**; **Herold**; **Jurković**; **Boschetti**; see also **Gelichi** for Venice against the Carolingians). Later Anglo-Saxon England should be included in this category of potential imitation of Carolingian practices – military, structural, monastic – by a State under threat (**Christie**; **Lavelle**; **Christie & Hodges**). These phenomena have so far been less intensively studied for Byzantine areas and their border regions, although **Kostova**'s study suggests that different types of defended sites existed in the Bulgarian territories than in the neighbouring Byzantine regions. For the Arabic conquest of Sicily, **Molinari** identifies a change in the type of settlements, but these appear to have followed the incorporation of Sicily into the new Arabic political framework and thus seem to be more an act of conquest and forced change than imitation.

It is difficult to assess how far the defended sites had a wholly military function and how far they were a physical statement of status and power. Of course, these two cannot be completely separated, since in a military conflict not only the practical defensive capabilities of a site will have played a role, but also the symbolic image of status and power that the attackers, and the defenders, will have associated with the site. It seems logical that a site with very strong defences suggested a powerful family or political unit in possession of the site and this might have discouraged potential attackers, both from within the same polity and from the outside, from undertaking operations against a given site. It is interesting to consider how far fortified sites were of a private or a communal nature, and who these private owners or communities might have been. In much of western Europe a seigneurial type of power seems to have existed, with influential families building and maintaining fortified sites, and sometimes a central power attempting, and struggling, to keep control over these activities. In the Byzantine and Arabic realms the State appears to have been in stronger control of directing such building activities (cf. **Molinari**; **Jurković**; **Kostova**), but archaeological research on fortified sites in these areas is currently less detailed than for most areas of western Europe; thus studies in the next decades are likely to provide many new insights. For the Slavic world, most often a 'tribal', territory-based, structure of power is suggested, with elements of an

imitatio imperii, copying Frankish patterns of status and power display, and possibly attached social patterns, as mentioned above (**Biermann**; **Urbańczyk**; **Herold)**. In these areas too, future research projects have a key role to play in developing our understanding of power structures of the 8th to 10th centuries.

Landscape Impact

A theme often side-lined when exploring fortified settlements relates to the landscape and its exploitation: while studies on towns very often make reference to traded goods and staples reaching the urban communities from their hinterlands and beyond, and while villages by their very nature are considered more closely for the field systems that are generated around the community, in discussion of military and defended sites the landscape impact is much more rarely taken into consideration. Frequently, there will be reference to location – a strategic setting, a hilltop or island site, a position enabling refugees from the fields beyond to take secure shelter, a place communicating with a territory, etc. – but rarely examination of how that site *worked* in that landscape. Indeed, a temptation is to focus heavily on the forms of the defences, the types of houses and the finds within, to the neglect of how these fortified communities used, fed off and manipulated their environs. The landscape around was, of course, crucial for the well-being and very day-to-day functioning of a settlement: even a purely military site could not live in isolation of its landscape, since, even if it was provided for in terms of supplies of grain and dried meat from further afield by some 'central authority' (such as might be claimed for Roman forts on Hadrian's Wall), it still looked to local farmers for fresh meat and vegetables and fruit; it required water; it needed wood, charcoal and kindling for fires; and it needed timber and stone for buildings (construction, repair). Indeed, as is now better recognised, soldiers might also often engage in hunting and fishing to supplement their diets and for sport – and some such activities were seasonal. In later contexts where militias were not professional paid forces, soldiers could also be farmers and their diet drawn from cultivation of crops, fruit and livestock local to their settlement.

In early to late medieval rural contexts – in both defended and open sites – key elements of the archaeological record include clear

and direct reference to the dependency on the landscape around: animal bones, plant remains, grain silos, hearths, post-holes for timber walls and supports, charcoal, spurs, etc. The defences also drew on the landscape – timber for the box-frames to secure the earthen ramparts; stone culled from fields or the immediate bedrock; water diverted to fill ditches or moats; towers to look across the fields (and to help protect and control farmers in these); and gates connecting with tracks into fields and beyond. These material and physical connections are crucial to our fuller comprehension of these early medieval communities. As **Quirós Castillo** discusses for northern Iberia, a regular feature of the sites are the rock-cut, deep-capacity, bulbous silos for storage of grain especially (cf. **Molinari**); these appear alongside or even inside workers' houses and reflect a family's basic and longer-term food reserve and resource; but they appear in greater numbers and often with greater capacities in the lordly sectors of the settlements and castles and signify the seigneurial control over the working population, ownership of lands and produce, an ability to extract a surplus and a tax, and an ability to redistribute and display authority. Mentally we can thereby conjure up an image of peasants filing up the hill with sacks to hand over grain, which might then be measured out under the watchful eyes of the lord's manager and deputy, before being fed into a specific silo, the names of the peasants then marked off before they trudge back down the rock-cut slope path, through the imposing gateway defining the upper complex, to their small timber-and-stone two-room houses.

Explicit assessment of landscape modification is offered by **Herold**, who shows the value of environmental archaeological studies to question whether these communities stood in cleared land and whether they determined major works of deforestation. As noted above, wood was a vital resource, and it is evident that management of timber stocks and woodland was pursued; what we cannot be certain of is whether this management fluctuated and some sites became dependent on more distant sources and supply mechanisms – as was surely the case for fully urban communities. Environmental changes can of course play a role in a site's fortunes and fate – decline, abandonment and shrinkage can reflect local economic depletion, since we must recognise that not every community worked well with Nature and that fields could easily lose fertility. Being able

to identify and record, for example, terraced and lowland fields and plots associated with upland sites, or wider land organisation for lowland sites, and to determine their phases of usage and loss, would offer substantial guidance on the viability of these sites based on local resources.

Quite diverse of course were the watery landscapes of Venice and Commachio in north-east Italy (**Gelichi**) where the lagoon and the waterways provided sources of livelihood (fish, salt, trade flow), routes of communication, as well as means to defend – and attack. Here the maritime/lagoonal environment appears wholly central to understanding both sites and fortunes. Arguably, studies of coastal-based fortified settlements also need to consider the sea as something more than just the venue for attackers and traders (**Jurković**; **Bowden**; **Tys *et al.***). Even though we might expect that trade and related activities formed a larger part of the existence of at least some fortified and unfortified sites (especially those we term *emporia*) than of most mainland sites, recognising the additional resources of the sea and their contribution to the sites' day-to-day functioning, in a similar way as recognising the resources provided by fields, pastures, woodlands, roads and rivers to mainland sites, is essential for reconstructing and understanding how and why these coastal-based centres emerged, developed and declined. Thus in the case of coastal-based sites, it is especially important to draw on results of environmental archaeology, both for reconstructing past water levels and coastline changes, and for understanding the provisioning of the sites with resources.

One gap in some cases in our understanding is how defended settlements sat in the wider landscape: were they the primary or sole focus of settlement in a zone, or did open, lesser sites also exist? Were farmers who supplied the sites scattered or might many have lived in the fortified site and gone out daily to farm, herd, etc.? Frequently small farming sites can be archaeologically ephemeral and hard to pinpoint even through systematic field or landscape survey – especially if these were compact, timber-built and short-lived structures with restricted material cultural presences in the early medieval centuries. For the north-west Slavic lands discussed by **Biermann**, archaeology is yet to populate the landscape beyond the 8th- to 10th-century strongholds with such open farms and hamlets;

however, the fact that the earlier defended complexes are substantial (*c*. 200–350 m in diameter) and feature outer enclosures or baileys, while the later defended sites are more compact (*c*. 60–90 m in diameter), but often have adjoining (or nearby) open settlements (to create characteristic 'stronghold-settlement-complexes'), suggests that farmers were gathered inside or immediately outside these defended spaces. The picture is not far removed from the hilltop and hillside communities of early medieval Tuscany, discussed by both **Fronza** and **Valenti**, where the 'worker community' is gathered immediately below the seigneurial, generally fortified space, but is one often not provided with a strong defining or defensive wall (this wall perhaps more to contain the residents, keep wild animals out, and to keep livestock in). Their key example is Miranduolo where extensive excavations have enabled the detailed organisation and evolution of the site, community and its economy to be explored and interpreted in depth.

Workforces and Residents

Comments above on the landscapes of these early medieval fortified settlements require us also to recognise the human (and animal) logistics. As exposed clearly in the Tuscan examples cited, where excavations have been extensive and where site stratigraphies are strong enough, then we can piece together more coherently how a site was lived in and the tasks that were undertaken to make these sites function as communities. Too often, however, our discussions on the populations are necessarily fragmentary: occasional house plots (not always with a large sample excavated); limited material culture and domestic waste (with much discarded down hills or in fields and thus divorced from the families or units that generated and possessed these); scattered data on site industries and the related workers (what were the communal tasks, where metalworkers also farmers, were there specific gendered tasks, where did people do their washing, were some iron tools 'pooled' and shared?); and often rare evidence for the people themselves in terms of diet, health and mortality (not always are burial grounds traced in or outside these sites; and we cannot of course connect individuals buried to houses occupied). Only rarely do projects cover sufficient ground and 'touch all bases' to generate a secure reconstruction of the community and its life (Such

projects include, for Italy, Scarlino and San Michele di Trino – see **Fronza** and **Valenti**).

This present volume wanted especially to bear in mind this need to see fortified settlements as 'communities' – after all, these were occupied sites, working and living places, domestic and industrial, with everyday social, economic and religious interactions, with shared spaces and communal tasks, plus private spaces and no doubt also areas for games. There were women, men and children, and no doubt the old and infirm, people who got injured, people who were good at hard labour, and others who were adept at herding. We should certainly be trying to think more of pits, wells, silos, stores, paths, defences, etc. in terms of private or shared, privileged or communal; currently it is easy to identify very basic divisions – an elite space, a religious space (often also elite) and space for 'workers' or 'peasants' – but it is important to push these social interpretations more. Hopefully close reading of all of the contributions here could be a start to question and understand these early medieval communities more.

Recognising that animals were also important parts of these communities is equally essential. Again, the simple route is to think of zooarchaeological evidence only as a guide to food reared, cooked, consumed and discarded in different phases of the site's usage. But animals were workers and core to the running and success of these settlements – in Ireland, cattle were almost the 'currency' for society (**Comber**); for monastic sites, calves and vellum were crucial for manuscript production and sheep were a feature of many of an early medieval monastery's economic strategy (**Christie & Hodges**); military and frontier bases must have required horse units for communications and fast deployment of troops (**Ollich *et al.***; **Kostova**; **Christie**); and some of the main *burhs* in the Kingdom of Wessex and larger fortresses elsewhere in Europe featured space enough both for troop and cavalry encampments, plus refuge space for both farmers but, as importantly, livestock (**Christie**; **Tys *et al.***; **Boschetti**). Animals are too often the invisible portion of the inhabitants of these defended sites – especially so in towns – and there is a research need to look more for evidence of stables, paddocks, enclosures, livestock-related material culture in and around these places, and to think also of the resource implications for these animals – from space to food. And a final animal-related consideration: did

dogs, cats and vermin abound in these places, to exploit people, food waste and food stores?

Qualities of the Archaeology

Dating – Radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology clearly are providing important routes to framing sites in the period of study, enabling archaeologists to define fortress origins, suggest phases of renewal, etc. Frequently, however, such dates are focussed on the defences; we are much less well informed on the interiors – although burials associated with sites may form an alternative dating guide (as for *Roda civitas* – see **Ollich *et al.***). Nevertheless, in many parts of Europe scientific dating, especially dendrochronology, of wood samples from the defences has brought about fundamental changes in the dating and interpretation of fortified sites, as for example in the case of the 'early Slavic' fortresses in the eastern part of Germany and in Poland; here the date of many sites was dramatically changed by dendrochronology from the 7th to the 9th century AD, thereby impacting strongly on the interpretation of these sites, as discussed by **Biermann** and **Urbańczyk** (cf. **Fronza** for dates generated for Tuscany). In many regions, obtaining dendrochronological dates from the defences of fortified sites would mark an important step forward compared to the current lack of scientific dates. However, it is also vital to link settlement features and burials, and thus communities, to these defensive chronological sequences: scientific dating of human and animal bone offers scope to understand internal settlement chronologies. Single graves or small groups of graves are often directly associated with ramparts – sometimes below these, or within the rampart itself (apparently buried during the building of the rampart), or even cut into ramparts and thus post-dating them. In addition, some fortified sites may have been used for burials for (much) longer than their settlements were occupied; this is likely to be linked to the symbolic meaning of these sites in later landscapes. Therefore, being able to provide chronological sequences of ramparts, settlement features and burials at fortified sites constitutes an essential part of understanding both the practical and symbolic role of these. With the improvements in and more widespread use of scientific dating techniques for historic periods the upcoming decades will no doubt bring about fundamental new interpretations for early medieval

Europe.

Ceramics and other items of material culture – We can only properly understand these sites and their communities if we look beyond the defences to the houses and the material culture. In this regard, ceramics remain a key tool, enabling insights into technology, access to resources, contacts both local and regional and even beyond. But ceramics remain problematic for many regions in this period and for some areas there is much work to do to create robust type-series for the Early Middle Ages; after the loss of Roman mass-produced imports our ability to date sites on the basis of often handmade local wares becomes much harder (*e.g.* **Molinari** highlights improving data for Sicily). Where few sites of the period have been excavated and few field surveys undertaken (*e.g.* Istria), so difficulties mount in generating coherent images of the economies of these places. Without good knowledge of the ceramics we will struggle to identify phases of use, peaks and troughs in occupation, economic strategies, and site ends. In addition to traditional archaeological pottery analysis, archaeometry has a strong potential to aid in developing ceramic chronologies and in identifying local and supra-regional exchange networks. Besides pottery, which remains the most widespread category of material culture at the vast majority of sites, objects made of other materials, such as metal and glass, can help in dating and interpretation. Very often, items of jewellery originate from larger-scale trade networks, or imitate objects from a larger area, than pottery and can thus highlight other components of a communication network maintained by the sites' inhabitants. In particular, the supra-regional analysis of glass beads could be a promising research enterprise, since many of these are likely to have formed a part of long-distance trade networks.

Levels of excavation of early medieval sites – This is, for many areas, still undoubtedly patchy, as highlighted, for example, for Istria (**Jurković**), Albania (**Bowden**) and Sicily (**Molinari**); and even in England one might accept that beyond some of the larger *burh* sites, knowledge of middle- and lower-ranking *burhs* is relatively weak archaeologically (**Christie**). In part this level of investigation may be due to sites continuing in use and thus accessible only through developer-led archaeology (which itself is underdeveloped in many parts of Europe); or through early medieval sites being obscured under

medieval defensive installations; or simply through early medieval archaeology being a low research priority. For Istria, **Jurković** identifies only Guran as a site that has seen any degree of good, systematic archaeology. In addition, different excavation methods might have an impact on our knowledge on fortified (and other) sites; while the problems of the usually not very detailed documentation of older excavations are evident, the last decades have also seen many different excavation methods used throughout Europe. Although there is nowadays a general trend towards stratigraphic excavation and the use of Harris matrices, even recent excavations might have been conducted with other methods, such as the 'planum' method used in many parts of the German-speaking world, or the 'negative' excavation method used in some areas of east-central Europe. The effects of these differences on the available information on the archaeological record should not be underestimated, especially when making supra-regional comparisons.

Linking historical sources and archaeology – In the archaeology of historical periods, it seems logical to attempt to link events mentioned in written sources to phenomena identified in the archaeological record. While this might work better in areas and/or periods with a multitude of written sources, it can be very problematic in those regions of Europe where written sources are scarce for the 8th to 10th centuries AD. In these latter areas it is likely that the mismatch between the historical record and archaeology will be strong and that 'forced' connections between these two types of evidence will lead to false conclusions. One frequent issue concerns the ends for sites, linked to problems both with excavation methods and written sources: it is too easy to see a fire at an excavated site as a 'destruction'; and with only vague historical inferences, warfare and campaigns are too often viewed as the 'answers' for ends. But without complete site excavation we often run the risk of assuming abandonment when some residual activity may continue and sites are partially maintained. In this regard, a more critical interpretation of the archaeology and the separate analysis, and subsequent comparison, of the archaeological and historical record might bring progress.

Other Themes

The above are a set of core areas that are being addressed, directly or

indirectly, across this volume. But there are many others that are mentioned which have significance and value too that will be registered. Evaluating their relevance as common trends will often require more study and evidence. Below, we briefly highlight two of these themes: the reuse of the past in the landscape, and the connections between churches and communities.

Reusing the past in the landscape – While some sites, such as in the Slavic areas and in some Scandinavian contexts, appear to be 'new' sites, created at a specific moment with defined roles (*e.g.* the Viking *longphuirts* of Ireland – **O'Sullivan**), there is perhaps a greater incidence of fortified settlements being established over pre-existing, often 'open' settlements, or ones with some former defensive aspect. Many *burhs* in Later Anglo-Saxon England were planted on previous but long disused Iron Age forts or even over ancient prehistoric ritual sites where, if we are to apply a rather functionalist approach, the engineers identified the potential of swiftly re-vamping eroded ditches and banks for new defensive capabilities (**Christie**). Quite possibly, these older, relict sites may have had symbolic meanings attached to them by the early medieval population, whether for signifying claims to land, power and authority, or as part of their local ritual/religious practices; most often a combination of these factors is likely to have contributed to the symbolic meaning of earlier sites and antecedent landscapes. As will be seen from many of the papers, it is not unusual to see that early medieval fortified sites have a mix of roots: some may indeed be new foundations with specific strategic or refuge goals and may occupy hilltops, promontories, etc.; some are direct successors to classical period sites (*e.g.* towns and *castra*); but many overlie – and sometimes exploit, if in varying depths – earlier settlements, sometimes defensive, sometimes religious, or sometimes simply domestic. Most frequent are reuse of hilltop sites of Bronze Age and/or Iron Age date – as evident in Wales (**Seaman**), Scotland (**Noble**), Ireland (**O'Sullivan**), across to Iberia (**Ollich *et al.***), Austria and neighbouring countries (**Herold**), Istria (**Jurković**) and Albania (**Bowden**). These phases of reuse may follow the break-up of Roman control (as in Wales) or may be delayed. It is unlikely that such reuse was 'by chance' or a random decision – these will have been sites or ruins long known to locals, perhaps indeed exploited for materials and robbed of finds – and in some cases we might expect that hilltop sites

in particular saw temporary usage for refuge prior to formal creation of walled settlements. Their use in the Bronze Age and/or Iron Age was due to strategic value, surveillance scope, an ability to oversee resources, and often symbolic meanings; their reuse in the Early Middle Ages seemingly often duplicated these same needs.

Church and community – Many, but noticeably not all, fortified sites discussed in this volume contained churches, some within the fortified space and some in its vicinity. At some sites, the churches are core features, dominant in terms of location and materials, often being the only edifices built in stone; this suggests that they played a key role in the lives of their communities. Some churches might have played a role in defence, such as, for example, churches at gates as in *burhs*, or set in elevated positions, perhaps as inner refuges. Many (northern) Slavic areas entered late in the process of Christianisation in the second half of the 8th to 10th centuries, and church presences seem variable, being usually associated with higher status sites. Some Tuscan villages appear not to have had a church inside, while others feature a chapel in the seigneurial zone only, which should impact on how we 'read' the religious role in these fortified communities – implying both physical and spiritual separation between lord and workers, with different types of services and communion for the peasant community. This leads us to question the role of clerics at fortified sites generally in 8th- to 10th-century Europe. Were clerics non-combatants? What were the arrangements at sites where the defences guarded a monastery or religious community alone? Do we need to think here of non-religious personnel for the purposes of defence? Or were the walls at these sites to provide a refuge and security only until a neighbouring secular authority could send armed succour? Answering these questions on the role of churches and clerics and the nature of their connections to the lay inhabitants of fortified sites needs closer scrutiny of the archaeological record, and an intensive study of the historical record. We hope that papers in this volume will go some way to developing supra-regional interpretation models related to the role of the Church in the life of these varied and prominent 8th- to 10th-century communities.

* * *

The above are the main common themes discussed in this volume.

But, of course, individual papers will touch on a number of further questions and offer many more details on the principal themes. To achieve a clear structure, the book has been divided into four broad geographical units: *North-western Europe*, comprising Ireland (**Comber**; **O'Sullivan**), Britain (**Noble**; **Seaman**; **Christie**) and Denmark (**Pedersen**); *Central Europe*, including Germany (**Biermann**), Poland (**Urbańczyk**), Austria and the neighbouring countries (**Herold**) and Switzerland (**Boschetti**); *Western Europe* with studies on Britain and Italy (**Christie and Hodges**), and England and France (**Lavelle**), as well as Belgium and surrounding areas (**Tys *et al.***) and different regions of Iberia (**Quirós Castillo**; **Ollich *et al.***); and finally *Mediterranean and Adriatic Europe* comprising Bulgaria (**Kostova**), Albania and surrounding areas (**Bowden**), Croatia (**Jurković**) and Italy with Sicily (**Gelichi**; **Citter**; **Valenti**; **Fronza**; **Molinari**). Some of these geographical units are, of course, very heterogeneous and most regions, as will be seen, show connections in many directions. Combined, we are convinced that the contributions to this volume present a wealth of archaeological evidence and related interpretations, which have the potential to become a strong basis for a step change in the understanding of defended communities and their landscapes of the 8th to 10th centuries in a European context.

Part I

North-Western Europe

1

The Irish Cashel: Enclosed Settlement, Fortified Settlement or Settled Fortification?

With Evidence from Ongoing Excavations at Caherconnell, Co. Clare, Western Ireland

Michelle Comber

Introduction

'Defended community', the term used in the title of this volume, can mean a number of things: 'community' generally refers to a group of related people and can be nucleated or dispersed; 'defended' implies protected, strengthened, guarded from threats, but does not specify the nature of the threat. Early medieval Irish communities were dispersed, though related by kinship and social ties. Various scales of community existed, from nuclear family to wider kinship group to larger political unit. The threats that might have sparked a need for defence included wild-animal attacks on livestock, cattle raiding, interpersonal violence and political events. Did any of these threats result in early medieval Irish communities defending themselves? If so, what form did that defence take and which factors directly influenced it? An overview of the political, social and settlement landscape provides useful context before considering these questions in relation to one settlement type – the drystone cashel.

The Political and Social Landscape

It is important to understand the political, social and settlement landscape in which cashels occur. The early medieval period in Ireland traditionally dates from the coming of Christianity in the 5th century AD to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in the 12th. The 5th and 6th centuries saw much change in Ireland, with a shift from a tribal to a more dynastic political structure. This caused, among other things, the displacement of large groups of people and the emergence of new, powerful dynastic families (MacNiocaill 1972, 1–41). There was not, however, a strong pattern of provincial or national kingship during this period (Ó Cróinín 1995, 41–62). Against this background, the new religion was introduced and began to spread. The initial Church appears to have been Episcopal, with monasticism probably becoming more dominant by the end of the 6th century (Ó Cróinín 1995, 147), though great variety existed in the early Irish Church throughout much of the early medieval period (Bhreathnach 2014, 167). The 7th and 8th centuries saw a more widespread acceptance of Christianity, with monasteries encouraging the development of the arts and facilitating the introduction of literacy. This period was also marked by extensive Irish missions in Britain and Europe 'when the foundations were laid for the high level of learning that Irish scholars were to bring to the Continent' (Richter 1988, 68). Politically, a relatively small number of royal dynasties gained power over entire provinces and the notion of a national or 'high' kingship began to grow (Byrne 2001, 254–274). The 8th century saw, arguably, the high-point of fine metalworking in Ireland, epitomised in achievements such as the Tara brooch and Ardagh chalice. The first recorded Viking contact with Ireland occurred at the very end of the 8th century (AD 795), their presence in Ireland influencing many of the changes that came in the 9th and 10th centuries.

Christianity was thus strongly integrated into Irish society by the 9th century. The growth of some monastic communities possibly saw a small number of sites emerge as proto-urban settlements or towns (see Bradley 1998 for examples). The 10th century marked the beginning of a decline in Irish scholarship in Europe, reflecting a renewed concentration on insular affairs (Ó Cróinín 1995, 229–232). In the secular world certain dynasties still dominated both provincial and high-kingship. The 9th century was a period of increasing Viking raids, leading to their establishment of temporary bases across the

island and, in the 10th century, five coastal towns. These newcomers interacted with native communities in a range of ways, both hostile and peaceful.

The final centuries of the early medieval period saw reform of the Irish Church to bring it more in line with Rome, and there was an increased militarisation of Irish society. More powerful over-kings emerged, vying for the high-kingship and taking the role closer to its ideals of island-wide rule than ever before (ibid., 272–92). The arrival of the Anglo-Normans, commencing in AD 1169, sparked major changes in Irish politics, society and settlement landscape and is traditionally taken as the turning point from early medieval to medieval in Ireland.

Early medieval Irish society was hierarchical, consisting of several social classes connected by a system of clientship. It was not, however, a caste system, as individuals were free to move from one class to another in both directions. Essentially, society was divided into three groups; the nobility, the free and the unfree. The nobility or privileged classes comprised seven different grades of king and lord, the free comprised two main grades of farmer, whilst the unfree ranged from tenants to slaves (Kelly 1995, 7–12). The clientship system that tied all of these together consisted of a series of contractual agreements between a lord or king and, most commonly, a number of socially inferior clients. In return for a grant of land and/or livestock, legal and military protection, the client paid an annual tribute of foodstuffs (mostly) and provided hospitality, labour and military service. The social position of a lord or king was reflected in the number and status of clients held.

Figure 1.1. Cahergal cashel, Co. Kerry (Photo: author).

The Settlement Landscape

The vast majority of this early medieval Irish society lived in enclosed settlements traditionally referred to as ringforts. Smaller numbers lived on monastic sites, cemetery settlements, crannogs and other miscellaneous site types that included promontory forts and unenclosed houses (see O'Sullivan, this volume). By the 8th/9th century AD, monastic sites varied greatly in both location and size: they comprised collections of buildings contained within an enclosure formed by timber palisades, earthen banks and ditches, or drystone walls; smaller sites were often built in more remote areas, larger examples along routeways and in central locations. Other, non-Church burial places (sometimes referred to as 'cemetery settlements') also attracted some settlement in early medieval times, a site type really only recognised in the past decade or two.

More numerous, with more than 1200 recorded examples, are settlements called crannogs. These are generally described as defended settlements located on an artificial platform or modified island in a lake. Initially regarded as places of refuge, crannogs were already being viewed as more permanent settlements by Wood-Martin in his

classic 1886 study. They were constructed by depositing layers of brushwood, stone, timber, etc., consolidated by timber piles driven in around the edges. A wooden palisade erected around the perimeter enclosed various houses and other structures built on the surface of the crannog. To date, most excavated examples have revealed evidence of high-status occupants. It is possible, however, that some may have had differing functions or status, as a variety of sizes occurs in some areas.

Figure 1.2. Location of cashels mentioned in text (Map: author).

Other early medieval settlements include promontory forts (both inland and coastal), secondary activity in a few prehistoric hillforts, and a growing number of unenclosed house sites. The only other major settlement form in early medieval Ireland was intrusive – the Viking town. Established in the 10th century, the five towns of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork and Limerick introduced the first proper urban settlement to the island. Enclosed initially by earthen ramparts and later by stone walls, these planned towns brought a market economy to Ireland, their influence gradually spreading far beyond their walls.

The Ringfort

The majority of Irish people, however, lived in dispersed enclosed farmsteads throughout most, if not all, of the early medieval period. Traditionally referred to as ringforts, one of the best descriptions of this monument type was provided by Sean P. Ó Ríordáin in his *Antiquities of the Irish Countryside* (1942, 29–30):

> In its simplest form the ringfort may be described as a space most frequently circular, surrounded by a bank and fosse or simply by a rampart of stone… Ringforts vary very considerably in size.

As this suggests, these monuments can vary in size, shape and building material. Most are circular but some are oval, irregular or rectilinear. Earthen constructs are most common, except along the western seaboard with its plentiful supply of raw material for drystone building. The earthen examples average *c*. 30–35 m in diameter, the stone ones 18–25 m. The typical ringfort, then, is roughly circular in plan, has an eastern entrance, measures approximately 30 m in diameter, and is surrounded by an earthen bank with external fosse or by a drystone wall. It housed a single farming family, and most excavated examples date between AD 600 and 900 (Stout 1997, 24).

Ringforts are found across the island of Ireland, with *c*. 45,000 recorded examples representing a minimum number. Some areas, such as county Sligo in the north west, are more densely populated than others. Different terms were employed by the builders and occupants of these sites: some, such as *rath* and *lios*, now generally refer to those of earthen construct, with *cashel* and *caher* describing the drystone versions (see O'Sullivan, this volume). The status of its occupants was

reflected in the form of a ringfort. Accordingly, most are of the typical size, surrounded by one rampart, reflecting the free farmers that dwelt within. A smaller number of sites have more than one enclosing rampart (closely-spaced and concentric). Of these, sets of two ramparts are most common, although sets of three and four are also known – these were the homes of the wealthiest and most powerful in society.

The ramparts normally enclosed one or two dwelling houses (often centrally placed) and some outhouses. Souterrains – artificial underground chambers and passageways – became common features of ringforts in the 9th century, with both refuge and storage functions. Occasionally two or more ringforts may be located relatively close together, though it is uncertain whether the neighbouring sites were in use at the same time. The farms worked by the ringfort occupants usually surrounded the settlement enclosures and were organised into fields of varying shape, size and function. Dairying formed the backbone of the early medieval economy in Ireland, with most farmers operating on a self-sufficient basis. As social status increased, so too the occurrence of personal ornaments, the variety of crafts practised, and the production and control of surplus for trade and exchange.

The Cashel

This paper is specifically concerned with one type of ringfort – the drystone cashel (Fig. 1.1). As previously noted, the typical cashel is often slightly smaller than its earthen counterpart. Its entrance is still found along its eastern half, and it is sited in similar topography to its earthen equivalents, preferring south-facing slopes if possible. Again, most, though not all, are circular. They are generally enclosed by drystone walls that have vertical internal and external faces with a rubble core between. Standard walls measure 1.0–2.0 m in height and width. External fosses are rare due the difficulty of quarrying these in areas of high bedrock, but do occur at Garryduff I, Co. Cork (O'Kelly 1962) and Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry (Fig. 1.2). O'Kelly described the former as a 'quarry ditch' rather 'than a specially provided addition to the defences'; however, he goes on to say that the 12'6"–19' distance from wall top to ditch base 'must originally have presented a formidable appearance' (1962, 22). Multivallate cashels are also relatively rare, with status more commonly reflected in the increased

diameter and size of the cashel wall. Perhaps the most spectacular example of a multivallate cashel is that of the trivallate Cahercommaun, Co. Clare (Hencken 1938).

The typical cashel, therefore, is 18–25 m in diameter, roughly circular in plan, univallate with walls 1.0–2.0 m high and wide, and an eastern entrance. Like earthen ringforts they are often overlooked by higher ground. Such a modest site is not overly defensive in nature. Others, however, though smaller in number, are much more impressive morphologically, featuring greater diameters and imposing walls, and are commonly located in more strategic positions – on heights, next to water, along routeways. These larger sites generally have more defensive entrances, with their thicker, higher walls facilitating the construction of mural chambers and internal terraces linked by flights of steps.

Burren Ringforts

In examining the defensive or non-defensive nature of these cashels, it is useful to look at a specific study area. One of the densest concentrations of cashels in Ireland is found in the Burren region of county Clare on the west coast (Fig. 1.3). The Burren comprises an upland karst landscape, with vast tracts of exposed limestone terraces and plateaux broken up by distinctive clints and grykes. To this day, this landscape provides excellent grazing and was densely populated throughout many periods of the past. This, in conjunction with a general lack of large-scale mechanised agriculture and the use of stone as a building material, has led to the wide-scale preservation of archaeological remains in this region. Cashels are, by far, the most numerous monuments in the Burren, with several hundred recorded examples, and they are often surrounded by relict field systems (defined by drystone walls), some quite extensive. The wealth of surviving evidence makes this area an ideal choice for the study of cashels and their landscape.

A research project was established in 2005 to undertake just such a study. It began with three seasons of survey work (funded by the Heritage Council of Ireland). The first season identified a study area covering over 70 km^2, incorporating part of the uplands to the north and greener, more fertile lowlands to the south. Approximately 300 recorded sites within this area were morphologically attributable to

the early medieval period; of these, at least 213 could be classed as ringforts, resulting in a minimum of almost three sites per square kilometre – well above the national average of 0.55 (Stout 1997, 53). Analysis revealed that many were deliberately sited to best exploit the most fertile farmland (a not uncommon tendency in early medieval Ireland). It also suggested, however, that some settlements may have been strategically positioned with regard to communication strategies and territorial politics.

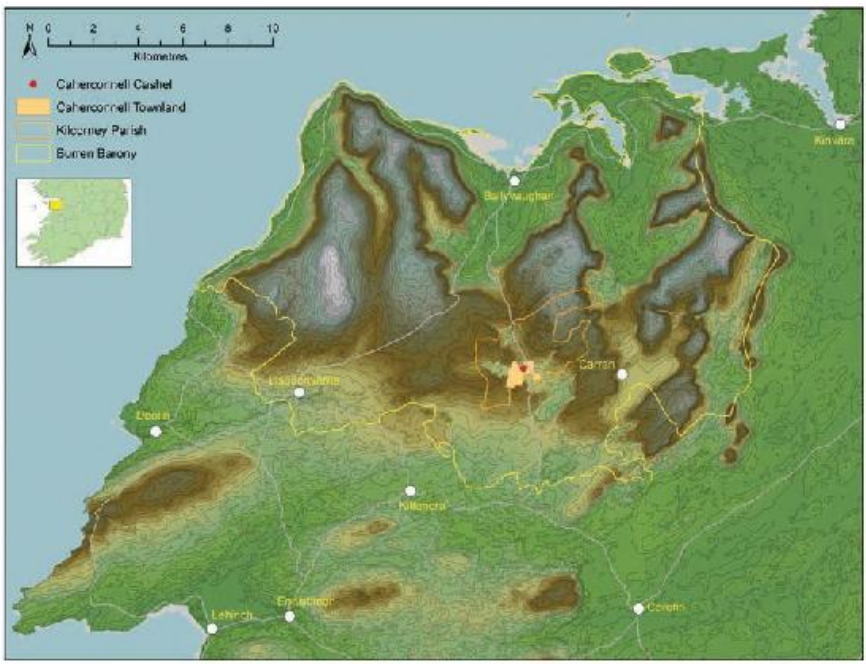

Figure 1.3. Location of Caherconnell, in the Burren, Co. Clare (Map by Noel McCarthy).

The second season saw detailed digital mapping of a particularly rich archaeological landscape within the larger study area. Extensive field systems and enclosures were traced in a 100 acre/ 40 hectare zone, many of which were previously unrecorded. Remains included a dozen different forms of field wall, individual fields, small enclosures, larger settlement enclosures, tracks and roads, cairns, megalithic tombs and castles. Much of this material is, morphologically, of early medieval type. Several small settlement clusters were identified, each containing at least two cashels surrounded by fields and other features. Questions of function, relationship and chronology were generated, questions that could really only be addressed by

excavation. To this end, a cluster was chosen for the excavation phase of the project. The chosen cluster, Caherconnell townland on the north of the original study area, was first mapped in detail (season 3 of the survey phase).

Caherconnell Townland

Caherconnell townland is located very close to what might be considered the centre of the Burren: it sits at the intersection of two natural routeways through the uplands, both of which are now traversed by modern roads, one running N–S, and the other E–W. That both routes were probably in use since prehistoric times is suggested by the distribution of monuments in their vicinity. The settlement cluster at Caherconnell lies just north of the townland centre on the edges of the uplands that dominate this area. The southern half of the townland drops to a shallow valley, the Kilcorney valley. This shallow basin contains deeper soils than many parts of the Burren, suitable for both grazing and crop cultivation.

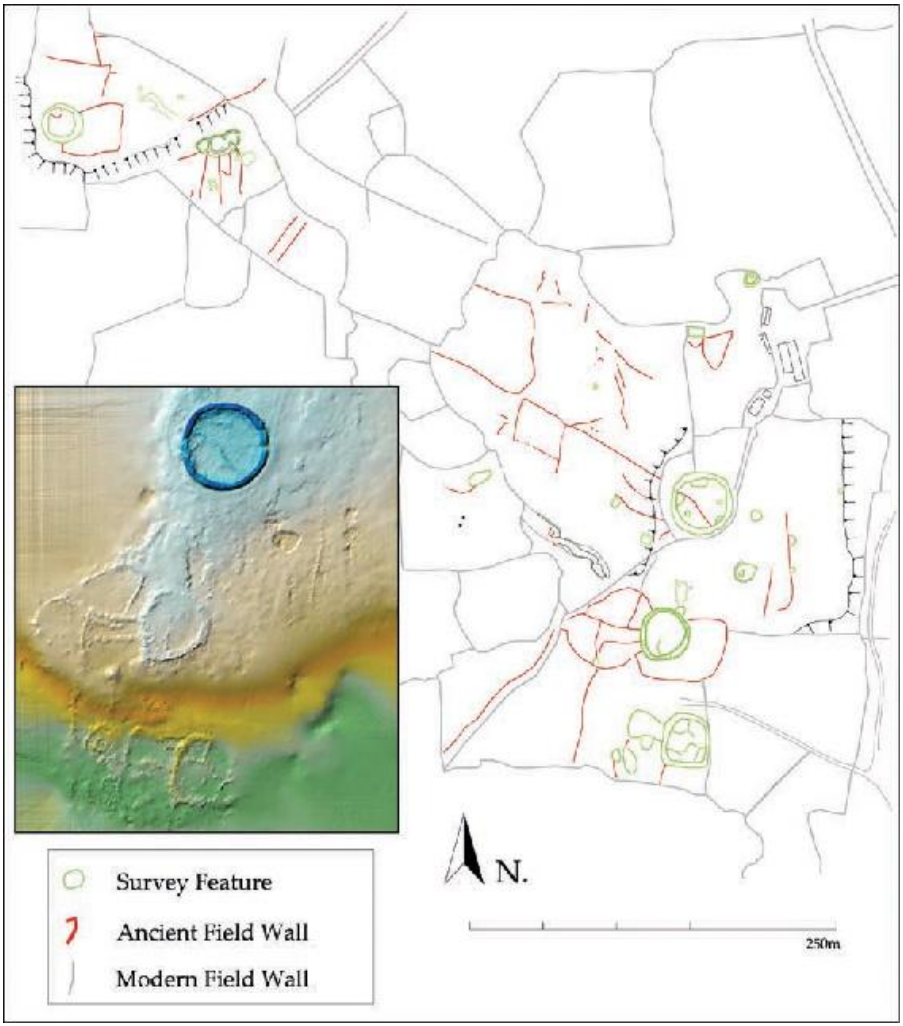

Figure 1.4. Survey of Caherconnell cluster, with survey core inset (Survey by Liam Hickey, inset by Cormac Bruton).

Figure 1.5. Caherconnell sub-square cashel with adjacent remains (Photo: NUI, Galway Archaeology).

Today, one of the most striking aspects of the Caherconnell landscape is the lack of archaeological remains in the fertile valley to the south, and contrasting survival of features on the surrounding higher slopes. This may relate to early modern clearance within the valley or its sole use in the past for agriculture. The valley is ringed by archaeological sites of varying date: closest to the valley, on its slopes, are a number of cashels (including those of the Caherconnell cluster); at greater distance and height are some prehistoric cairns and megalithic tombs (including the excavated portal tomb of Poulnabrone to the north and the excavated burial cairn of Poulawack to the south); the only ecclesiastical site in the area is that of Kilcorney, approximately 1 km due west of the Caherconnell cluster, comprising the ruin of a medieval church surrounded by the remains of an early medieval monastic enclosure. Apart from this, the closest identifiable medieval archaeology comprises the 15th-century Glensleade towerhouse *c*. 3 km to the north.

In the Early Middle Ages the Burren comprised one territory. From at least the 7th century AD the people who lived here, the Corcomruad, were subjects or 'clients' of over-kings from farther south and east in the province of Munster. During the 10th century, the Munster kings imposed more direct rule on the region by replacing Corcomruad kings with members of their own ruling dynasty. Their descendants, two related families that became known as the O'Connors and O'Loughlins, competed with each other for rule of the Corcomruad. In the 12th century they officially split the territory between them, with the O'Loughlins taking control of the northern sector, where Caherconnell is situated. It seems that Caherconnell remained in O'Loughlin hands until 1607 when ownership was transferred to their Munster overlords, the O'Briens (Gibson 1990, 101–102). Slightly later, in 1641, Caherconnell was forfeited by the O'Briens to the English who gave it to John Comyn, a transplanted 'papist' from fertile lands in county Limerick.

The settlement cluster at Caherconnell, presumably associated with a branch of the O'Loughlin family, their ancestors and the Corcomruad before them, was the focus of the third season of project survey (Fig. 1.4). The core of this cluster comprises three drystone enclosures or cashels – the largest example called Caherconnell (the cashel of Conall) to the north, a second less well-preserved circular

cashel due south of this, and a sub-square cashel south of this. A number of previously unrecorded features were mapped in their vicinity, including two Bronze Age boulder burials, a partially visible stone chamber, a small mound, a Late Bronze Age/Iron Age barrow, and some small house sites and non-modern field walls. The excavation phase of this project hopes to target as many of these elements as possible, exploring questions of function and chronology. Of the core cashels, excavation of the sub-square example has finished and work at Caherconnell cashel is ongoing. These two sites are ideal for exploring the defensive nature of Irish cashels.

(i) Sub-square cashel (Fig. 1.5)

The sub-square cashel at Caherconnell has walls of limestone, with large blocks or slabs laid horizontally to form faces and smaller stones filling the space between, originally up to 3.0 m in width. The enclosure has relatively straight sides meeting in slightly rounded corners, covering an area of 34 × 37 m. Its entrance, comprising a simple paved gap in the wall, lies just east of centre in the south wall, facing into the Kilcorney valley and the routeway intersection previously mentioned. The enclosure wall stands to a maximum surviving height of 1.5 m and is surrounded by much tumbled stone. The site is positioned on a narrow terrace, directly overlooked by higher ground to the north and dropping away to the Kilcorney valley to the south. The interior of the enclosure is 1.0–2.0 m below external ground level to the north, but is largely level, with just a slight downward slope in its southern half. Much tumbled stone and some lengths of walling were visible in the interior prior to excavation. Most of the tumbled stone was located along the inner edge of the enclosure wall. The labour-intensive nature of excavating this material resulted in much of it being left *in situ*, except for three cuttings along the south wall. Otherwise, most of the interior was excavated (The excavation was funded by the Royal Irish Academy).

Figure 1.6. Caherconnell cashel (Photo: author).

Although stratigraphy was thin across much of the site, it was possible to identify the sequence of events that occurred. The first activity was the levelling off of the natural bedrock and gravels, providing an even surface for the construction of the enclosure. This was followed immediately by the building of the walls and a number of internal structures, including three sub-square/sub-oval drystone structures, at least two of which were houses. Their double-faced walls were over 1.0 m thick, though only their basal courses survived, and their entrances faced south. All three were located in the southern half of the interior. The 'yard' space around them was sub-divided using short lengths of narrower walling. An occupation layer covered all. The end of occupation was marked by the dumping of midden material around the enclosure entrance.

The material culture included several hundred chert lithics, some of prehistoric type, and three prehistoric stone axeheads – one re-used as a whetstone and another deliberately placed beneath the paving stones of the entrance. Items of daily use included whetstones, stone spindle-whorls (one broken during manufacture), quernstones, fragments of miscellaneous iron implements and a range of iron knives. Higher status items of personal ornament were also recovered and included fragments of a bone comb, bone dress-pins, lignite bracelets, iron dress-pins, two bronze dress-pins and a small assemblage of glass beads. Also discovered was evidence for on-site metalworking (whetstones, slag, possible mould fragments), textile and leather-working (spindle-whorls, tools) and stone-working (unfinished spindle-whorl). A small collection of charcoal, charred hazelnut remains, marine shells and over 115 kg of animal bone were also recovered.

Radiocarbon dates place the site occupation between the 7th–9th centuries AD, with the midden material in the entrance dating to the 10th century. The material culture and size of the enclosure reflect occupants of upper middle-class status or, perhaps, the lowest reaches of the nobility. The settlement is, however, very modestly defended: it is directly overlooked by higher ground, with walls that were never more than 2.0 m high. It might effectively have defended against wild animals and cattle raids, but could not have withstood a determined attack.

(ii) Caherconnell cashel (Fig. 1.6)

Caherconnell cashel, the largest of the enclosures in the townland, is circular in plan measuring 42 m in external diameter, with walls 3.0 m in width and height (originally probably about 4.0 m high). The walls are composed of rough horizontal courses of local limestone blocks and slabs forming internal and external faces, with a rubble core between. A narrow ledge or terrace runs along the inner face of the wall in places, accessed by short flights of steps; these would have given access to the top of the wall. The entrance is on the east, with a dividing wall and the remains of two structures visible in the interior prior to excavation. The cashel is situated on the highest point in the cluster, on the northern edge of the Kilcorney valley, with unobstructed views in all directions.

The modern interior of the cashel is clearly raised above that of the external ground surface, 0.5 to 1.1 m in the difference – excavation, by the Caherconnell Archaeology Field School, has proven that this is due to an accumulation of occupation material within the enclosure. Exploration commenced with a test excavation in 2007 (Comber and Hull 2010) and full-scale research excavation since 2010 (Hull and Comber 2011; Comber 2012, 2013, 2014). To date, approximately one third of the site has been investigated – the area around and inside the entrance, and part of the central area.

A number of phases of activity have been uncovered, the earliest of which pre-dates the construction of the cashel by several centuries: around AD 600 a woman and two infants were buried beneath a low mound on this edge of the valley; contained within two cists built on the bedrock, remains comprised E–W oriented inhumations unaccompanied by grave goods. Some time in the second half of the

7th century a fire was lit in a purpose-built quarried fire-pit close to the burial mound.

The cashel was constructed around the second half of the 10th century – rather late for the construction of a ringfort. The earlier burial mound was clearly visible, yet no attempt was made to clear it out of the way. Instead, the cashel wall was built right over the top of it, deliberately incorporating these ancestors into the new settlement. Elsewhere, the wall was built directly on bedrock. The earliest occupation layers are associated with the construction and initial habitation of the site in the 10th/11th century. Thus far, a small number of post-holes are the only features attributable to this phase.

The start of the next phase of occupation, the middle occupation, is marked by the deliberate laying of a slab surface on top of the earlier occupation material, and the construction of a rectangular stone-walled house. This also dates to the 10th/11th century, with the slabs effectively levelling off the cashel interior. Features associated with the slab surface include post-holes, lengths of wall and two paths leading towards the cashel entrance; these were covered by a habitation layer. Later, from 11th–14th century, these events were repeated with a second slab surface laid over the earlier occupation layers, complete with stone-built drain, open-air hearth, paved path leading to the entrance, and occupation layer (late occupation). The final human occupation of the cashel dates to the 15th/16th century, with the latest C14 date stretching to the start of the 17th century (corresponding with previously mentioned historical events). This final occupation saw the remodelling of the cashel entrance into an impressive access point with cut and dressed stone, controlled by two sets of double doors that opened into a roofed entrance passage. Two of the features visible prior to excavation, the wall dividing the cashel interior in two and the rectangular house, also date to this phase. The associated occupation material has been disturbed by the later use of the cashel as an animal enclosure.

Approximately 900 artefacts have been recovered so far, including some chert lithics and fragments of a few prehistoric stone axeheads. The bulk of the material, however, relates to daily life in early medieval and medieval Ireland, the artefacts being of similar form to those used in the earlier square cashel to the south. These include fragments of rotary quernstones (one decorated), whetstones, bone

spindle-whorls, sewing needles and a weaving 'sword', iron nails, miscellaneous tools and knives, and evidence of on-site metalworking. Items of both a functional and decorative nature include the remains of over two dozen bone combs, mostly decorated. High-status items include iron and bronze dress-pins, bronze buckles and decorative fittings, a harp-peg, fragments of polished stone bracelets, beads and studs of quartz, glass and amber, part of a glass bracelet, a decorative gold strip, iron arrowheads (some armour-piercing), a barrel-padlock key and a bone-and-antler gaming piece. These represent personal wealth, a need for weapons and security, and the enjoyment of music and entertainment. In addition, the varied diet and wealth of the inhabitants are reflected in a very large assemblage of animal bone and the presence of fish bone, marine shells and hazelnut remains.

A 10th- to 17th-century date range, when viewed alongside the historical references, might suggest that Caherconnell cashel was built by the ancestors of the O'Loughlin family that later owned it – a noble, if not 'royal' family. The imposing nature of the site, its strategic location and rich material culture all support this high-status interpretation. Whoever built this site laid claim to the territory in a very visible manner, with their new settlement both dominating the surrounding landscape and acquiring/controlling the ancestors already buried there. From the 12th century onwards, much of Ireland fell under the control of the Anglo-Normans and their descendants. The native occupants of Caherconnell, however, continued to live as their ancestors had, resisting the new culture and architecture that spread across medieval Ireland. Their status and their military and political control are clearly displayed in the defensive nature of their settlement.

The Wider Context

So, how do these two case studies fit into the wider Irish landscape of stone-built early medieval settlements? Are they representative of all geographical regions, all relevant centuries, or all social classes?

Geographically, the distribution of cashels is limited, largely concentrated along the western seaboard. Within this distribution, most excavated examples occur in the south west and west, and the Burren case-studies in the west. Much of our evidence, then, is only *directly* applicable to these areas though, *indirectly*, may have a wider

significance. Similar studies of earthen ringforts elsewhere on the island, with their much larger assemblage of excavated evidence, might reveal interesting comparisons. Some earthen ringforts, such as the platform ringforts, do display a defensive attitude, while many others clearly do not.

Figure 1.7. Leacanabuaile cashel, Co. Kerry (Photo: author).

It is likely that the lowest classes of early medieval Irish society never owned their own enclosed homes. Unenclosed houses or hut sites may date from many periods, but some excavated examples are early medieval, as at Ballyutoag (Williams 1984), Ballyvollen (Williams 1985) and Craig Hill (Waterman 1956) in county Antrim, Terryhoogan (McSparron 2007) in Armagh, Drumadonnell (McSparron 2001) in Down, Ballynacarriga (Noonan *et al.* 2004) in Cork, Ballynavenooragh (Coyne 2006), and Valentia Island (Hayden 1993, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000) in Kerry, and the 'Spectacles' at Lough Gur (Ó Ríordáin 1949) in Limerick. Several of these are associated with field systems, the fields most likely worked by the house occupants. Some unenclosed houses, especially in upland areas, may have been used by animal herders on a seasonal basis, and yet others may be linked with temporary/seasonal activities such as

shellfish gathering, charcoal production or ore extraction and primary processing. None of the sites have produced evidence of high status and they may, for the most part, belong to the lower social classes. Although the sample size is small, radiocarbon dates suggest that unenclosed houses were used throughout the early medieval period. These settlements are clearly not high status and not defensive.

The material culture produced by some of these unenclosed houses is not unlike that from some excavated cashels such as Carrowdotia, county Clare (Bermingham *et al.* 2012, 66–69) and Rinnaraw, county Donegal (Comber 2006). These modest enclosures of *c*. 25 m diameter were never very defensive and were probably owned by the lowest grade of free farmer. Such small cashels are relatively common in areas like the Burren and were used throughout the Early Middle Ages. Of the two named examples, Carrowdotia dates to the 6th/7th century and Rinnaraw to the 9th/10th century.

What then of the cashels belonging to the more prosperous free farmers and the nobility? These sites might be identified by larger diameters, stronger walls and, when excavated, higher-status material culture. Although the number of relevant excavated cashels is still quite low (especially in comparison to its earthen equivalent), one can detect a difference between 7th-/8th-century sites and those dating to the 9th/10th century. Prosperous sites of the 7th/8th century include Garryduff, county Cork (enclosed by a double-faced stone wall with rubble core and external rock-cut fosse – see O'Kelly 1962) and the square cashel from Caherconnell. The internal space of the latter is greater than that of lower-class enclosures, while the walls of the former are thicker than those of their modest cousins. Yet, the Caherconnell square cashel is directly overlooked by higher ground, and Garryduff's walls were never very high (maximum surviving height of 1.37 m). It might appear, then, that up to the end of the 8th century, some higher-status sites were not overly concerned with military-style defence. They were, perhaps, designed to easily protect their human and animal occupants from wild animals and fast raids, with some elements of the cashels more concerned with marking that settlement as different to the majority of its neighbours. Cashels such as these were making social and status-related statements on the landscape but would not have been very effective against a concerted direct attack.

As outlined earlier, the 9th century was a period of political, religious and economic change in Ireland (*e.g.* McCormick and Murray 2007, chapter 5). A change is also visible in the architecture of upper-class cashels. Dating largely to the 9th and 10th centuries, sites such as Caherconnell and Cahercommaun (Hencken 1938) in Clare, Leacanabuaile in Kerry (Ó Ríordáin and Foy 1941), and Carraig Aille in Limerick (Ó Ríordáin 1949), are all much more defensive in nature. Leacanabuaile and Carraig Aille occupy knolls or rises in the landscape, elevating them above the surrounding terrain and offering views in all directions (Fig. 1.7); in addition, Leacanabuaile lies immediately north of the morphologically impressive and clearly defensive cashel of Cahergal (even allowing for modern reconstruction). The walls of the two Carraig Aille cashels (43 and 47 m in diameter) measure a solid 4.2 m thick which, in conjunction with the local topography, would have provided very ample defensive capabilities.

The two Clare examples are even more obviously defensive. Caherconnell has walls 42 m in diameter and 3.0 m thick, originally approximately 4.0 m high; the wall top was accessible via steps and a terrace on its internal face, and its entrance the only gap or weak point in the wall, a gap defended by two sets of double doors with the cashel wall continuing overhead. The high-status material culture included arrowheads, some of which were armour-piercing. The date of Cahercommaun cashel has been much debated, but radiocarbon dates obtained by Blair Gibson as part of his PhD research concentrate in the late 8th to late 9th centuries (Gibson 1990, 246–247). This cashel is trivallate and covers 0.81 hectare, its outer wall measuring 116 × 69 m. It is situated on an inland cliff and contains two souterrains, one of which exits into a vertical cleft in the cliff face, providing egress to the ravine below. The inner wall is up to 8.5 m thick and stands to a maximum height of 4.3 m, with its wall top accessible via two internal terraces originally linked by ladders set in niches. Its entrance was 1.6 m wide and protected by what the excavator interpreted as a sentry post or guard-house; a paved entrance path, 1.2 m wide, ran straight from here through the two outer walls (each *c.* 2.0 m thick), flanked by drystone walls for the entire length. Its high-status material culture included an iron sword and some possible spear ferrules.

Conclusion

Although based on a relatively small excavated sample, the emerging picture of early medieval Ireland sees lower-status settlements (whether unenclosed or modest cashels) as non-defensive. These cashels are best classed as enclosed settlements and they existed throughout the period in question. In the 7th and 8th centuries upper-class cashels displayed some modest defensive capabilities, though possibly more for display purposes than practical application. These centuries saw the flourishing of the Irish pastoral economy and the flowering of the arts. For most people wealth was embodied by cattle, and good cashel walls surrounding an ample yard could help protect that wealth and, at the same time, display it to the surrounding community. Such cashels could be termed defendable settlements under certain circumstances. There are few records of attacks on settlements during the 7th and 8th centuries, rather a predominance of battles occurring on open landscape, on plains, at borders and at river crossings. Noticeably, some of these battles are associated with cattle raiding and pursuit of raiders (Halpin 2008, 21–25).

The Viking raids and increased native raids of the 9th century led to more unsettled times and, arguably, an increased militarisation of Irish society. Recorded attacks on settlements increased, both monastic and secular – *e.g.* the royal site of Lagore crannog was attacked and burned in AD 850 by an alliance of native and Viking forces (Price, in Hencken 1950, 18–34). Those with something worth stealing, or those controlling territory coveted by others, were forced to defend themselves in more practical ways. Display was still important, but display of status linked to display of practical defensive capability. Upper-class cashels became fortified settlements, and this change can be clearly traced in the adjacent excavated cashels in Caherconnell townland, county Clare. Importantly, throughout all of the relevant centuries, settlement was the primary focus of the cashel; none can really be interpreted as settled fortifications where the sole interest was defence and military operations.

The cashels do, therefore, reflect the existence of some defended communities in early medieval Ireland. The exact nature of those defended communities, however, was inextricably linked to the contemporary social and political situation.

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2

Early Medieval Defended Settlement Enclosures in Ireland in the 9th and 10th Centuries AD

Aidan O'Sullivan

Introduction

The defended enclosures active in Ireland in the 9th and 10th centuries AD are really part of the longer story of the early medieval settlement landscape of Ireland, across AD 400–1100, which is itself overwhelmingly about the construction and inhabitation of enclosures of various morphological forms. Between the 6th and 12th centuries, people built, occupied and used several different types of settlement enclosure, variously defined by earthen banks, dug ditches or fosses, stone walls and wooden palisades. Indeed, both the archaeological and the historical evidence implies that virtually the entire early Irish population, whether secular or ecclesiastical, of varying social classes whether kings, lords, commoners, slaves, or even the immigrant Scandinavian groups and native Irish after the mid-9th century AD (see below), lived together within some form of 'defended enclosures' (O'Sullivan 2014a; 2014b). These were not, however, the sole settlement type: archaeology has certainly recognised unenclosed settlements, comprising houses and huts in fields or open country, or occasional seasonal occupations at coastal shell midden sites, and even places of habitation at cave sites (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a, 112–120; Dowd 2015) active in the same period as the enclosed communities.

Archaeological survey and excavations have provided an excellent

sense of the character, chronology and social and ideological roles of such settlement enclosures and of the houses, buildings and economic activities within them (*e.g.* Corlett and Potterton 2011; O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a; O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014b). There is also a rich set of early medieval Irish historical sources – including annalistic references to forts, anecdotal accounts of settlement enclosures and mentions of monastic enclosures in saints *Lives* and narrative literature, as well as legal texts that indicate how the settlement enclosures were seen as defining different types of community – such as the households and kin-groups that are described in early Irish law, monastic communities and townsfolk (*e.g.* O'Sullivan 2011; O'Sullivan and Nicholl 2011).

The traditional rural, pastoral character of modern Irish agriculture means that very large numbers of these enclosures survive in the contemporary landscape, and they were often also protected for generations by their association in folk-beliefs with the fairies or the Otherworld (Fig. 2.1). There are, for example, in Ireland today at least 47,000 known surviving early medieval 'secular' settlement enclosures, which are generally known in Irish archaeology as 'ringforts' (Stout 1997). These settlement enclosures are typically situated on good agricultural land, as would be expected of rural communities engaged in herding and cereal cultivation, and are reasonably consistently sized, a diameter of 25–35 m being a good rule of thumb for their size (monastic enclosures would be significantly larger, up to 90–120 m across and more – with very large enclosures up to 500 m in diameter). There is also a type of settlement enclosure which was used for both habitation, agricultural and burial, and these so-called 'settlement-cemeteries' add to the complexity of the evidence (see below).

It seems likely that the early medieval landscape was both extensively and intensively occupied. LiDAR analyses, geophysical surveys and numerous archaeological excavations in advance of roadway and pipeline developments especially have variously increased the number of early medieval enclosures by 30–40% and suggest that the preliminary figure of 47,000 sites is actually a substantial under-estimate: we should probably be thinking of *c*.65,000 early medieval settlement enclosures across the island. In addition, there are probably more than 2,000 crannógs (artificial island dwellings, essentially settlement enclosures on islets) in the lake

land regions (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a; 2014b) and there are *c.* 5,534 early Irish church settlements, which themselves are also typically within their own small settlement enclosures of ditches, earthen banks and stone walls. We might thus suggest that, all told, there were well over 70,000 early medieval settlement enclosures in Ireland, dating from the 6th–12th centuries AD.

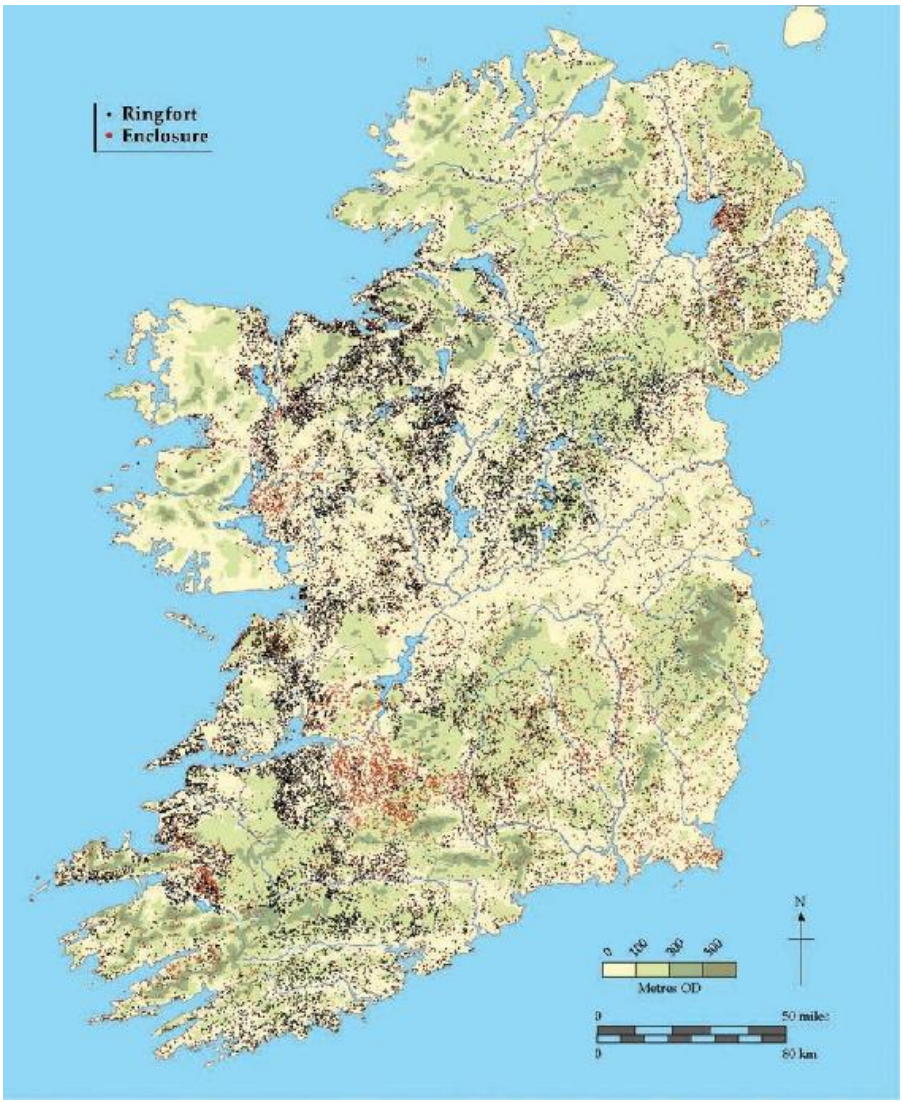

Figure 2.1. Map indicating the widespread distribution of over 47,000 early medieval settlement enclosures or ringforts – mostly earthen raths and stone-built cashels – scattered throughout Ireland (Map by, and reproduced courtesy of, Matthew Stout).

In chronological terms, radiocarbon dating and artefact

assemblages indicate that most of these sites start to be built and occupied by the early 6th century, with typically generations of occupation through the 7th and 8th centuries AD (O'Sullivan *et al*. 2014a, 74–78). It is possible that the rate of construction of early medieval raths lessens after *c*. AD 800 (though this pattern may be influenced by the fact that most radiocarbon dating efforts have primarily sought the lowermost fills of ditches so as to identify to 'origins' or initial construction phase of ringforts, thus ignoring their subsequent occupation histories). However, there is plenty of archaeological evidence to suggest that many continue to be occupied into the 9th–10th centuries AD (as indicated, for example, by recovery of brooch or ringed-pin types typically 9th–11th century in date). The extent of this later occupation of settlement enclosures will only become clear when the large numbers of sites excavated in recent years are fully published.

By the mid-9th century, a new class of defended enclosures, admittedly not in great numbers, appear in the form of Viking longphorts (*longphuirt*) or defended pirate raiding bases, which appear as deliberate constructions built from the AD 840s onwards to protect raiding Viking forces and their ships. Ireland's earliest Viking towns in the 10th–11th centuries are also themselves situated within defended enclosures of banks, ditches and palisades, and are occasionally termed in contemporary early Irish annalistic sources as a '*dún*' or fort, suggesting that these Viking and Hiberno-Norse urban populations were also perceived and understood as inhabiting a bounded, defended settlement enclosure.

Definitions, Morphologies and Chronologies

Early medieval settlement enclosures can be classified according to their morphologies, which is usually based on the characteristics of their enclosing features, which were variously different types of earthen banks, ditches (fosses), palisades, post-and-wattle fences, stone walls, or combinations of these. In early medieval legal texts and hagiographies of the 7th–8th centuries AD, the Old Irish word '*les*' refers to the enclosed space itself, and this is variously translated as 'farmyard' or 'courtyard'. The word '*rath*' was used to refer to the enclosing element, which was typically a perimeter earthen bank with an external ditch (modern usage takes the word 'rath' to mean the

entire site). Stone walls were also used as an enclosing element and, in Old Irish, such stone-built enclosures were known as a *caiseal* (anglicised today as 'cashel') or a *cathair* ('caher'). The word *dún* (fort) was used to describe various settlement enclosures, often of high status (O'Sullivan *et al.*2014a, 48).

The most common early medieval settlement enclosure type in Ireland is the rath, which can be defined as a circular, oval or irregular space surrounded by an earthen bank and fosse (or ditch), typically 28–35 m in diameter (Fig. 2.2). Depending on the number of enclosing banks and ditches, raths can be univallate, bivallate or multivallate, the latter being very rare and probably to be associated with royalty (Stout 1997). However, the vast majority – over 80% in some regions – are reckoned to be simple univallate sites, defined by the digging of a circular ditch and the throwing up of a low internal bank and counter-scarp external bank (Stout 1997; O'Sullivan *et al* 2014a, 50). The occurrence of bivallate and multivallate enclosures can occasionally be explained by change across time, and it is not unknown for a univallate site to have a second ditch and bank – occasionally within the original enclosure – constructed to increase its morphological complexity.

Early Irish laws of the 7th and 8th century describe a society based on kinship groups and a ranked, hierarchical system of social classes, with various category of kings, lords, commoners, semi-unfree (*e.g.* dependent labourers) and fully unfree people (*e.g.* slaves) (see Charles-Edwards 2000, for an historical overview). It is likely that the very complex social hierachies described relate to the niceties of legal practice, rather than being genuinely reflective of how people saw themselves and each other in real terms. However, it has long been suspected that the morphology of raths relates in some way to the social ranking or status of their inhabitants, with apparent indicators of status being location, size, prominence, and the scale of 'defences' (Edwards 1990, 6–33; Mytum 1992, 102–166; and Bhreathnach 2014 for a recent overview of this society, and O'Sullivan and Nicholl 2010 for observations on how settlements may have been organised with status, kinship and gender in mind). Stout's (1997) model of how settlement enclosure morphology could reflect social status has been influential, with his proposal being that kings occupied multivallate residences, lordly households inhabiting slightly larger, more

morphologically complex enclosures, and 'ordinary' free commoners occupying simpler, univallate sites. There is clearly something in this normative model that explains morphological diversity, although, oddly, the finds assemblages or material culture from different site types are broadly similar.

There is an ongoing debate about the origins and chronology of raths, but they appear to be constructed in large numbers from the early 6th century AD onwards, and became the classic form of Irish settlement in the 7th–9th centuries AD (see O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a, 64–79 for full discussion). The process by which they were abandoned as a settlement form is less clear. Analysis of radiocarbon dates from their lower ditch fills would at least suggest that they were not being constructed *de novo* much past *c.* AD 800, yet absolute dating evidence and artefact assemblages on some recent excavations reveal that many saw occupation into the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries AD and after: the rath at Deer Park Farms was occupied from the 7th to 10th century (Lynn and McDowell 2011), and there are numerous other examples of settlement enclosure with evidence for 'late' occupation (see O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a and 2014b for overviews and gazetteers of sites with a range of occupation evidence). Indeed, in some parts of the country that did not fall under the sway of Anglo-Norman rule, i.e. the western and north-western regions that continued to be controlled by the native Gaelic Irish lordships and chiefdoms in the 13th–14th centuries, it seems very likely that raths were a normal, traditional settlement form for at least the upper classes up until the late 16th century.

Figure 2.2. A striking image of three early medieval univallate raths or settlement enclosures at Ballinderry townland, Co. Roscommon (Photo: © National Monuments Service, Dept of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht).

There are some clearly high-status sites that are on mounds, the

most notable example being the early medieval settlement at Knowth, Co. Meath, a known royal residence, set on top of a Neolithic passage tomb (Eogan 2012). It is possible that some raths were heightened or raised during their occupation towards the 9th or the 10th century, either quickly as a deliberate elevation of a settlement to signal social status, or as part of the gradual accumulation of settlement layers across time, with debris, rubbish and gravels and clays brought in over decades to deal with waterlogging or soggy conditions – a notable example of the latter being the raised rath at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, which began life in the 7th century as a simple univallate rath and by the end of the 10th century was a raised rath with houses and occupation material on a flat-topped mound (Lynn and McDowell 2011). It is the case then that early medieval raths have to be considered as sites at least potentially with occupation horizons dating to the 9th–10th centuries, but that they certainly did not emerge as a class then, or that they are neccessarily high-status or defensive in function. The average rath is a simple enclosure with a shallow ditch and a relatively low bank, which could hardly have been defended for long by a family group (Lyttleton and Monk 2007).

Cashels can essentially be regarded as the stone-built equivalent of earthen raths, and are typically found in regions where stone is more easily located as a building material – generally in the western parts of Ireland (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a, 53–55). The enclosing walls of stone cashels can be quite impressive in terms of size, scale, defensibility and architectural impressiveness. Some particularly largely cashels or duns may have been associated with high-status settlement. It is possible that cashels were being built slightly later in the early medieval period, after *c.* AD 800, but this is not always the case (Fig. 2.3). There is, however, increasingly strong evidence from some regions, such as the Burren in Co. Clare in western Ireland where early medieval stone cashels are known, some of high status (Fig. 2.4), with some still being built and occupied in the 10th and 11th centuries and beyond (Fitzpatrick 2009). These essentially served as the defended forts of the Gaelic Irish, while continuing to be used for day-to-day settlement and economic activities.

Promontory forts are essentially a variant of the rath or cashel, except that they are located on headlands and cliff-edges, usually on the coast, with a boundary of bank, ditch or wall to separate a

physically isolated residence from the space further inland. The precise role of coastal promontories remains enigmatic; they may have served as defensive refuges or as well-located settlements overlooking and dominating maritime routeways. Few have been archaeologically excavated, but most of those that have seen investigation have produced early medieval occupation evidence, as at Dunbeg, Co. Kerry, where the multivallate banks and ditches cutting the headland off seemingly date to after AD 800 (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a, 62–64).

There are also other forms of built settlement enclosure, varying in size, shape and form, indicating that, for the early Irish, it was dwelling within a boundary that mattered, and not the precise classification or shape of enclosure. In recent years, there has been recognised a large, and growing, number of early medieval settlement enclosures within which there are houses and buildings, but also discrete burial grounds or small cemetery areas, but yet where there is no clear evidence for a wooden or stone oratory or church or other ecclesiastical features (*e.g.* cross-slabs, shrines, etc.) (Fig. 2.5). There has been a reluctance to term these as 'church settlements', and instead they have been variously termed 'secular cemeteries', 'cemetery-settlements' and 'settlement-cemeteries' (O'Sullivan 2014a *et al.* 55–57). Their enclosures can be complex, with several and intercutting boundaries, situated over an area up to 50–70 m in diameter, and some enclosures measure up to 100 m in diameter. The sites frequently show evidence for settlement and agricultural activities from the 7th–11th centuries AD, with cobbled areas and pens for livestock, horizontal water-mills, corn-drying kilns and souterrains (underground storage chambers), indicating their possible function as estate centres. The example of Raystown, Co. Meath, featured five cereal-drying kilns and up to eight watermills, surrounding the burial ground at the heart of the site. Some settlement-cemeteries have yielded large amounts of cattle, pig and sheep bone, indicating intensive livestock management (Seaver 2010), while many have evidence for industrial activities, such as ironworking, as seen at Johnstown, Co. Meath, and Carrigatogher Harding, Co. Tipperary (see O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a, 56–58 and 306–312). At the same time, we can observe a discrete area within the overall settlement – occasionally but not always defined by its own ditched boundary – that is given over to human burial, sometimes of

over 100 individuals, suggesting that these are the burial places of the kin-group associated with the settlement and the surrounding farmland over several generations. In chronological terms, settlement-cemeteries often begin in the 5th century AD, and are used for multiple generations thereafter, up into the 11th century and after, and so certainly fall into the 9th–10th centuries span.

Crannógs are another distinctively Irish settlement enclosure form (and are also known in Scotland), but this time situated on water. These are essentially artifically built islets, typically 20–30 m in diameter, situated in shallow lake waters. They date from prehistory to the early modern period, but often produce good evidence for occupation from the 6th to the 11th/12th century AD (O'Sullivan 1998; O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a). Due to their waterlogged nature, they have the potential for spectacular archaeological survival, such as post- and-wattled roundhouses, intact occupation layers, crafts and industrial debris and a full array of organic artefacts of wood and leather. Clearly some early medieval crannogs were aristocratic or lordly residences, as suggested by excavations at Lagore and Moynagh Lough (both in Co. Meath) and Coolure Demesne, Co. Westmeath; however, it is also evident from surveys which have identified numerous smaller islets, and from some excavations, such as at Sroove, Co. Sligo, that people of lower social-status might build and occupy smaller island residences too, or use them as platforms for metalworking in particular (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014, 58–62). Only a few early medieval crannógs have been excavated to modern archaeological standards but these show that most were occupied between the 6th and 9th centuries AD. However, Ballinderry Crannóg No. 1, Co. Westmeath was occupied in the 10th–11th centuries, while the recently discovered and excavated crannóg at Drumclay, Co. Fermanagh, lasted well into the later Middle Ages (Bermingham *et al.* 2013). It seems likely then that many Irish crannógs were occupied into the 9th–10th century.

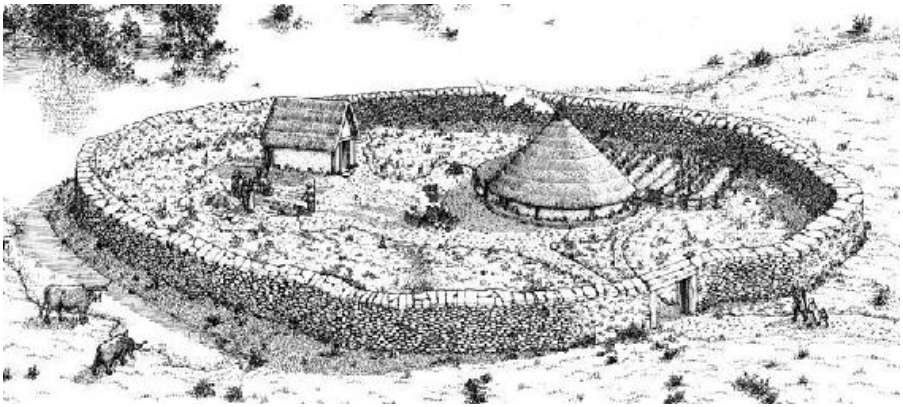

Figure 2.3. Artist's reconstruction drawing of an early medieval stone-walled cashel and burial ground – and possible wooden church or oratory – at Owenbristy, Co. Galway, as it might have appeared in about AD 700 (Reconstruction drawing by Daniel Tietzsch-Tyler, reproduced with permission of the artist, Eachtra Archaeological Projects and the National Roads Authority).

Figure 2.4. Artist's photoshop reconstruction image of an early medieval cashel settlement with small fields at Cahercommaun, Co. Clare, a probable high-status settlement. Strikingly, recent archaeological evidence suggests that many early medieval settlement enclosures were situated in open country. (Photoshop reconstruction by Conor McDermott, UCD School of Archaeology, based on an aerial photograph by National Monuments Service, Dept of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht).

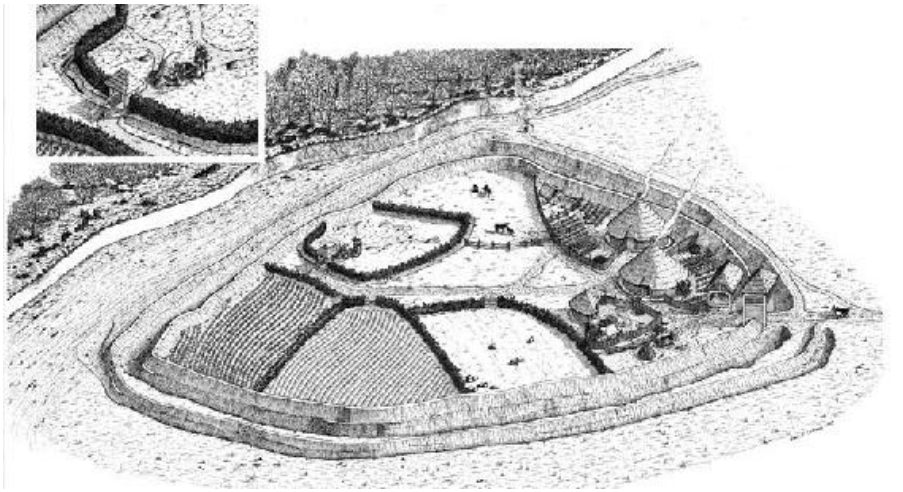

Figure 2.5. Artist's reconstruction drawing of an early medieval settlement-cemetery at Parknahown 5, Co. Laois, as it might have appeared c. AD 800 (Reconstruction drawing by Daniel Tietzsch-Tyler, reproduced with permission of the artist, Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd and National Roads Authority).

Finally, it should be remembered that early medieval Irish church or monastic settlements were frequently enclosed with in a boundary known as the monastic *vallum*. According to an early 8th-century text, the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*, holy places should be surrounded by two or three enclosures; these enclosures had a symbolic or ideological role, with increasing sanctity as one went further into the settlement, the inner core being exclusively devoted to religious worship, and the likely locations of the church, round-tower, burials, shrines and other features associated with religious rituals (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a, 145–146). At some monastic settlements such as Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, Nendrum, Co. Down (Fig. 2.6) and Armagh, Co. Armagh, there are very large defended or bounded spaces of monastic *valla* or ditches, with enclosures 200–500 m across (see also Christie and Hodges, this volume). The inner core is indeed the location of churches, crosses and high-status burials; a middle enclosure may have been used for habitation and clerical work and study; while the largest, outermost enclosure probably housed livestock, crops or craftwork places. It is unclear how large the populations of these monastic enclosures was; almost certainly they varied according to the political, symbolic and economic power of the monastery in question, and even to the time of year (*e.g.* with large crowds of pilgrims congregating for religious festivals or saint's days).

Some monastic settlements likely took on the role of markets and re-distribution within the early Irish economy after *c*. AD 800, and with some acting as proto-towns in the 10th–11th centuries (O'Sullivan *et al.*2014a, 175–178). On the other hand, there have been archaeological excavations of monastic enclosures such as Clonfad, Co. Westmeath, where there is a certainly very large enclosure with significant evidence for iron-working and bone/antler working, but very little evidence for houses or streets, indicating perhaps that the large enclosures were merely fields for cattle and crops, or else an architectural expression of a religious idea or ambition (Stevens 2010). It is interesting that the monastic enclosure feature itself did not always last. Indeed, many enclosure boundaries were allowed to fill in with soil and vegetation, and some monastic enclosures were in fact deliberately back-filled in the 8th–9th centuries AD as their original function diminished or changed (O'Sullivan *et al*. 2014a, 148). Early medieval church settlements were certainly occupied into the 9th and 10th centuries, and although some were abandoned, many remained in use well into the Middle Ages, often becoming the locations of small villages or later towns.

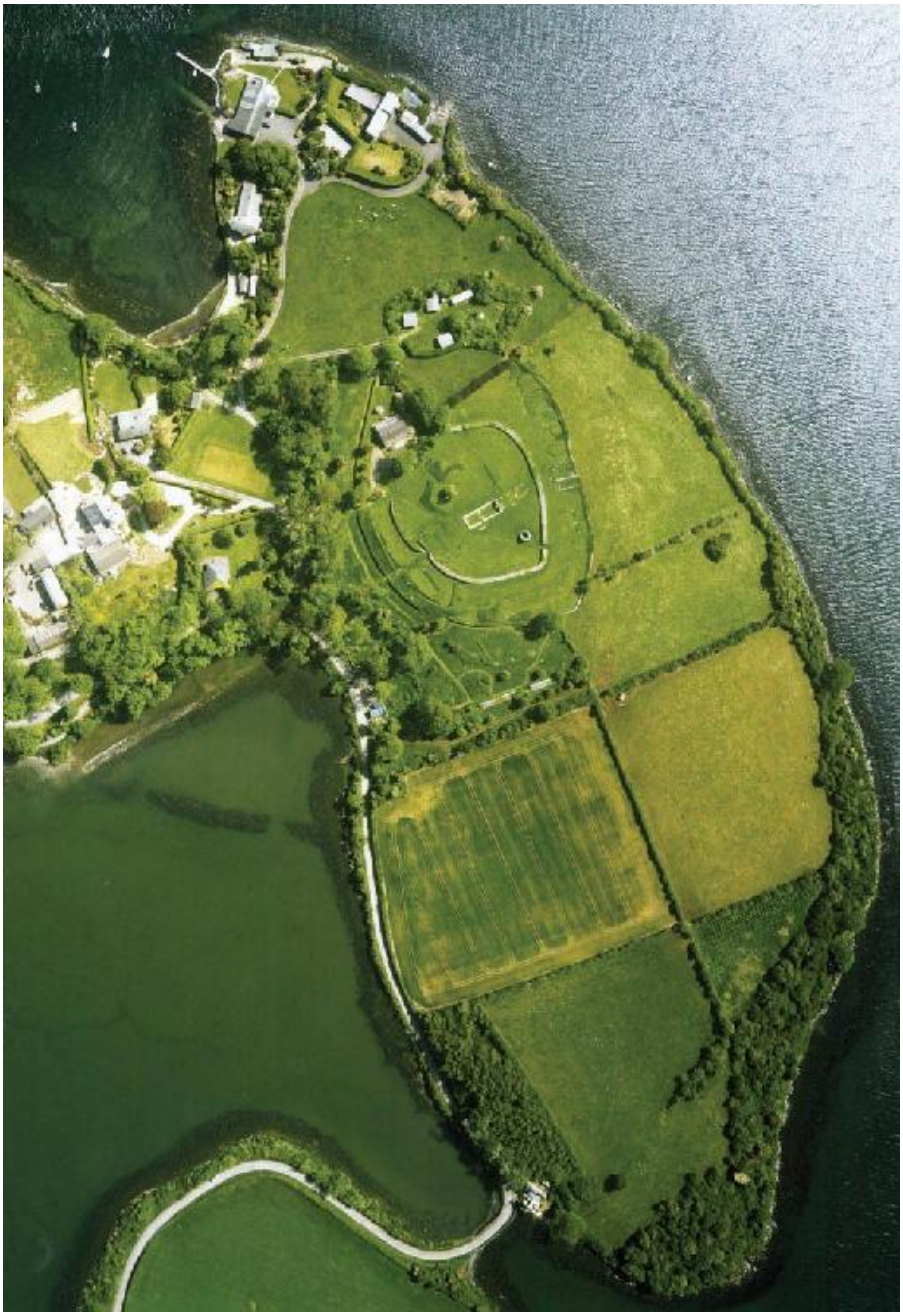

Figure 2.6. Aerial view of the early medieval monastic settlement at Nendrum, Co. Down, showing the site's enclosures, the church and round tower in the innermost enclosure, the buildings against the second enclosure wall, the outermost enclosure faintly visible, the intertidal horizontal watermill complex to the east (north is at the bottom of this image) and the monastery's island setting. (Photograph by Gareth Phillips, RAF, courtesy of Finbar McCormick).

Viking Raiding Bases or *longphuirt* in the 9th Century

Probably the most defensively-minded enclosure type of 9th-century Ireland is the Viking *longphort* (plural: *longphuirt*), which seems to emerge from their raiding activity after the mid-9th century (O'Sullivan 2014a, 121–127). Viking raids in Ireland begin about AD 795, by single ships or small fleets, largely during a summer sailing season, with the raiders returning thereafter to their homelands. By the 840s, Viking fleets and their men (and women, clearly enough) began to establish raiding bases for overwintering, so as to resume their activities the following spring. Irish annals refer to these temporary fortified camps using the term *longphort* ('ship-camp' or 'ship-landing'), but also *dúnad* or *dún* (Ó Floinn 1998; Maas 2008, 229–231; Kelly and Maas 1995; Kelly 2015). In 841, the *Annals of Ulster* state that 'the heathens were still on Loch nEchach' (Lough Neagh) having plundered from there the previous year and having led away 'captive bishops and priests and scholars, and put others to death'. The wording suggests that the raiding Vikings were using a defended base somewhere on Lough Neagh that they had established in 840. The term *longphort* was first used in 841 in relation to a site at *Linn Duachaill* (Annagassan, Co. Louth), 'from which the peoples and churches of Tethba were plundered', and also in relation to *Duiblinn* (Dublin) 'from which the Laigin and the Uí Néill were plundered'. In 842, the *Annals of Ulster* note again, presumably with some concern, '*Geinnti for Duiblinn beos'* – 'The heathens still at Dublin' – implying once more that the Vikings had a semi-permanent defended place out of which they were operating.

It was from such *longphuirt* that the Vikings penetrated neighbouring territories from the mid-9th century onwards. There are sufficient annalistic references to suggest that there were at least 20 such sites, and possibly more that are not mentioned in the sources (Ó Floinn 1998, 161; Simpson 2010; 2012, 94; Kelly 2015). Many historically recorded raiding bases were strategically situated on the borders of political kingdoms: for example, the *longphort* at *Linn Duachaill* (Annagassan, Co. Louth) was situated between the territories of the Conaille and Ciannachta, and the *longphort* at *Duiblinn* lay between the early medieval kingdoms of Southern Brega and of the Laigin (Ó Floinn 1998, 162). A number of raiding bases, including those on offshore islands such as Ireland's Eye or Scattery Island, or

inland at Dublin, also appear to have been established on or adjacent to Irish early medieval monastic sites, perhaps even actually taking over the ready-made monastic enclosure (Ó Floinn 1998, 163); the presence of furnished Viking burials adjacent to a number of ecclesiastical sites (Harrison 2001, 74) may also support this view. In addition to those mentioned above, Viking *longphuirt* were located at *Inber Dea* (Arklow? Co. Wicklow) as early as AD 836, and at Narrow Water and Strangford Lough, Co. Down; at Lough Ree on the River Shannon; and at Cork and Limerick (Ó Floinn 1998, 162).

The archaeological identification of these Viking raiding bases/settlements has seen much debate in recent years (see Kelly 2015), with some suggestions that they did not physically exist as a separate category of defended enclosure, or that Vikings simply took over existing monastic enclosures with their buildings and stores of food. Recent investigations at Woodstown, Co. Waterford, Annagassan, Co. Louth (see below), and possibly at Dublin, would seem to have resolved the issue, and help confirm the archaeological characteristics of 9th- and 10th-century *longphuirt* (Kelly 2015). In brief, the typical Viking *longphort* was a large defended enclosure, sometimes D-shaped in plan, located in a prominent, defensible place, situated close to navigable water, preferably at the confluence of a river and its tributary where ships could be drawn up or else anchored in shallow water. They may also have had a citadel, or innermost small defended fortress (Sheehan 2008; Simpson 2010; 2012, 94; Kelly 2015). However, there is variation in both morphology and siting: thus, a possible *longphort* at Dunrally, Co. Laois is evident today in a D-shaped ditched enclosure, measuring 360 × 150 m, situated on a promontory created by the confluence of River Barrow and the smaller Glasha River. This may be the *Longphort Rothlaib* ('the camp of Rodulf'), which was destroyed by the Irish in AD 862. The site was strategically located on the boundaries of the territories of the Uí Failge, the Loígis and the Uí Muiredaig (Kelly and Maas 1995, 30–32; Kelly 2015, 58–59). Another possible *longphort* has been identified on the western bank of the River Shannon, at Athlunkard, Co. Clare, immediately upstream of the modern city of Limerick, with finds of an iron spear-head, spear-butt and plough coulter from a 'D-shaped' enclosure (measuring 75 m in length) and with small conical silver weights nearby (Kelly and O'Donovan 1998, 13). Kelly (2015) has likewise

identified several other Viking *longphuirt* using place names, landscape and monumental evidence, and occasionally Viking Age finds from rivers and shorelines.

While apparent that a Viking *longphort* lay somewhere on the banks of the River Liffey in Dublin, the most spectacular recent evidence for Viking *longphuirt* has emerged from the noted archaeological investigations at Woodstown and Annagassan (Russell and Harrison 2011; Sheehan 2008; Kelly 2015).

The presence of a Viking fleet on the River Suir, close to its confluence with the River Barrow, is known from the annalistic reference to *loinges Puirt Láirge* (the fleet of Waterford) being defeated by the King of Osraige in 860. Excavations in the modern (and Viking Age) town of Waterford itself had not previously recovered traces of Scandinavian settlement before the mid-11th century; however, at a site known as Woodstown 6, some 8 km upstream on the River Suir, geophysical survey and some excavation revealed evidence for Viking Age occupation and industrial activity within a D-shaped enclosure, some 460 m in length along the riverbank by 160 m in width, situated along the river's southern banks, protected to the southwest by a small tributary and marsh. The enclosure was defined by ditches and palisade-topped banks. There was some evidence for possible rectangular structures inside the enclosure, and a Viking burial with weaponry lay outside the enclosure's north-eastern entrance. Over 5,000 objects were recovered from the site, dating to either the early 9th century or to between AD 850–920 (Russell and Hurley 2014). Ironworking was evidently carried on here, indicated by iron ingots as well as nails and clench rivets for ship-building, as might be expected of a Viking *longphort*. Other evidence for metalworking included crucible fragments, stone moulds, tuyère and furnace fragments and burnishing stones, while bone, antler and amber-working were also attested. In addition, at least 200 lead weights were recovered, plus silver ingots, hack silver, melted silver and a Kufic coin – all suggestive of silver-working for trade or tribute payments. Domestic finds included rotary whetstones, hones, pins, a gaming piece, amber beads, knives, decorated bone and spindle whorls. The presence of a loom weight and a spindle whorl suggest production of yarn or cloth, and probably the presence of women on site, reminding us that the communities resident at these *longphuirt* were more than just young

men intent on plunder, but included women, as well as men and women engaged in crafts, production, food preparation, etc.

The most recently identified *longphort* is at a coastal location at Annagassan, Co. Louth, probably to be equated with a site named in the annals in AD 841 as Linn Duachaill, set between the Irish territories of the Conaille Muirtheimne and Ard Cianachta and implicated in various military campaigns in the mid-9th century, and again briefly in the 10th before vanishing from the historical record (implying its abandonment) (Kelly 2015, 77–84). The site has now been identified through aerial photography, geophysical survey and some excavation as a very large enclosure stretching along the coast, measuring up to 1.18 km NW–SE. Like other sites, it possibly had a citadel or small, innermost defended enclosure, surviving today as a cliff-edge fort known as Lis na Rann, at its southern end. Previous antiquarian discoveries here include a small amount of pieces of ecclesiastical metalwork, possibly brought as booty to the *longphort*. The wider *longphort* was defined by an earthwork across a narrow part of ground to the northwest, thereby creating a slender, but well defended promontory between the sea out in Dundalk Bay and the saltmarshes of the River Glyde's estuary. Finds from recent excavations include Viking ship roves and rives, a Viking armlet hack-silver piece, a lead weight, as well as animal bone with some material producing radiocarbon dates not inconsistent with a 9th-/10th-century occupation.

The Viking *longphort* at Dublin, which has long been sought, was seemingly occupied between AD 841 and 902, at which time the Vikings were reputedly expelled from Dublin. According to traditional historical interpretation, they returned in 917 whereupon they established the town that subsequently flourished to become Ireland's principal urban settlement. The difficulty of identifying the Dublin *longphort*'s precise location is of course arduous because, unlike Woodstown and Annagassan, it lies somewhere under the streets of a modern city. The location has been variously postulated as upstream from the Viking town at Kilmainham-Islandbridge (the location of the main 9th-century Viking warrior burials/cemeteries – see Harrison and O Floinn 2015); at Ussher's Island; along the south bank of the Poddle pool at Dublin itself; or on the prominent headland between the rivers Liffey and Poddle. Simpson (2012) has suggested that there

is mid- and late 9th-century evidence from this headland and its surrounds. The earliest evidence at Temple Bar West and Parliament Street signify 9th-century occupation activity along the west bank of the River Poddle, almost where it meets the Liffey. Across the tidal pool of the Poddle and to the south, there are also earlier, 9th-century Viking warrior graves at South Great Georges Street, situated on the south bank of the river. Other discoveries in the area include possible 9th-century sunken structures, some early enclosure ditches, evidence for industrial activity, including hearths, ironworking and other features indicating manufacturing. Kelly (2015) has recently argued that the Dublin *longphort* could essentially have occupied the entire space that was later the focus of the 10th-century town, meaning that it could have stretched some 500 m along the southern shore of the Liffey (Simpson 2012, 98, Fig. 2.4; Kelly 2015, Fig. 4.14).

Overall, therefore, although the archaeological evidence for *longphuirt* is still limited to what has been discovered from generally small-scale excavations, there is a growing recognition of the character, use and form of these settlements in the 9th and very early 10th century AD, and also of their potential scale. The large sites at Annagassan, Dublin and Woodstown in particular could each have accommodated populations in the hundreds or even thousands, as well as massive Viking fleets of 60 to 100 ships. They would have been occupied for several decades, and they probably no doubt changed in character over that time. Furthermore, the consistent evidence for industrial activities demonstrates that they were more than temporary camp sites, or simple defended places for armies and fleets to overwinter, but were also settlements associated with habitation by mixed populations, crafts and production, and also trade and exchange. Their largely young male populations were undoubtedly fixated on raiding, looting and slaving, as well as forging alliances with native dynasties; however, we must recognise also women, craftspeople engaged in manufacturing, and traders both local and international. Indeed, places like Dublin gradually evolved as larger, more fixed agglomerations and became urban settlements, whereas other sites like Annagassan and Woodstown seemingly lacked this potential and were abandoned after some decades (Sheehan 2008; Simpson 2012, 109–110; Kelly 2015).

Ireland's Viking Towns – Defensive Enclosures of the 10th and 11th Centuries

By the end of the 9th century, the Viking *longphort* at Dublin – now occupied, even if only intermittently, for almost 60 years – was probably developing as a substantial trading settlement on the banks of the River Liffey. After *c*. AD 915, Viking towns were also being established at other coastal locations: Waterford, Cork, Wexford and Limerick (Wallace 2005 and 2008; Simpson 2000; Hurley *et al*. 1997; Hurley 2010). These towns featured defensive enclosures and were strategically situated close to water, often on headlands at the confluence of large river estuaries and smaller tributaries. Initially populated with immigrants, through acculturation and contacts between the Vikings, Irish and others, they evolved to become distinctive, creolised communities of their own, inhabited by peoples of mixed ethnic ancestries, language and culture (Wallace 2008). Ireland's Viking town populations were responsible for an important slave trade; varied productive crafts and industries; and the creation and sustaining of a new urban market economy with the populations in the surrounding landscapes. Situated on Atlantic maritime trade networks, that extended ultimately from the Arctic to the eastern Mediterranean (and beyond), these communities also placed Ireland within a wider world of cultural connections and economic exchange routes (Wallace 1987).

Viking Dublin and Waterford are perhaps the best understood archaeologically, and Dublin, after its growth as a town after *c*. 917, became the pre-eminent town in Ireland, probably due to its location on the Irish Sea, its connections with Britain and the north Atlantic seaways, as well as its location on the political boundary between two powerful Irish kingdoms. While its 9th-century *longphort* may have been an important manufacturing and trading centre, by the early 10th century the Viking settlement at *Dyflin* was developing into an urban settlement, possibly as a deliberate strategy by its rulers. Excavations suggest that the earliest part of the town lay on the original headland between the banks of the rivers Poddle and Liffey (Simpson 2010, 2012), most probably on the site of the original *longphort*. The town then likely expanded westwards and southwards from there (and northward into reclaimed portions of the Liffey), until occupying most of the headland (Halpin 2005).

The defensive enclosing features at Dublin evolved over time, being initially earthen banks topped with wooden fences. In the 10th and 11th centuries, successive palisaded earthen banks encircled the town, originating at first with low banks to protect the town's riverbanks from flooding, being gradually built up with mud, stone and palisading (Wallace 2008, 434; O'Sullivan *et al.* 2014a, 127–128). In the 11th century, more prominent banks were constructed, such as at Fishamble Street, where a considerable bank was built of gravel, stone and earth, reinforced with post-and-wattle screens and crowned with a palisade fence, or at Ross Road, where Bank 4 forming the southern boundary of the town, was *c*. 6.0 m wide and over 4.0 m high; this was probably mounted by a palisade trench, and its form remained the same until the early 12th century (see O'Sullivan 2014b, 249–256 for a more complete account of the town's defensive features). This bank formed the town's southern defence. By the beginning of the 12th century, a stone wall 1.5 m wide and potentially up to 3.5 m high was built along the earlier earthen embankment at Fishamble Street. Waterford also has good evidence for 11th-century defensive banks and, uniquely, for a substantial, late Viking Age gateway or defended entrance (Wallace 2005, 822).

The Viking towns of Dublin and Waterford were densely occupied, with houses closely packed together, garden plots, streets and perhaps some areas for open-air markets or public assemblies. The houses were typically small (6.0–8.0 m in length), rectilinear buildings with rounded corners, with a central aisle and beds/benches to either side. The thatched roofs of straw or heather were supported by posts, and the side walls were of woven hazel rods. The houses had front and rear doors, porch features and possible storage areas. Each house was situated at the front of its own narrow, rectilinear or trapezoidal plot, which was defined on either side by post-and-wattle fences. These property boundaries remained largely static over generations, and where plot fences were repaired and rebuilt, they were done so along the lines of the preceding property boundary. This preservation of property rights across time could indicate either an ordered town plan centrally regulated, or a sense of the ways in which people could live together as neighbours, respecting each other's boundaries. House outbuildings and pathways, by contrast, were not static and were built in different parts of the plots from generation to generation (Wallace

2005, 824). The townsfolk engaged in a range of manufacturing and trade, and were supported by agricultural produce brought in from the surrounding countryside.

Conclusions

In summary and conclusion, one can observe that, by and large, early medieval settlement enclosures were the predominant places of residence of most people in early medieval Ireland, and this situation prevailed well before the 9th and 10th centuries. Although they might have been useful at times of danger, or were used temporarily as places to protect livestock during cattle raids (and annalistic sources clearly indicate that both secular and ecclesiastical enclosures were attacked and sacked by raiding armies, including during conflicts between monasteries), most enclosures were not built primarily with defensive or military activities in mind.

Early medieval settlement enclosures would not tend then to be seen as distinctively different 'defended enclosures' in Irish archaeological discourse, but would be regarded by most scholars as simply the typical settlements of the period, with some hints from site morphology and chronology of the evolution of some more prominent enclosures in the 9th–10th century (*e.g.* the appearance of raised raths, or the use of settlement-cemeteries over long periods), and recognising of course that their inhabitants were often victims of periods of warfare and of raids.

Neither is it the case that early medieval 'central places' emerged as a distinctive site type. By the 10th century, there were certainly some prominent, high-status settlement enclosures used as residences by the aristocracy (such as at Knowth, Co. Meath – see Eogan 2012), but similar settlement enclosures had been residences of Irish kings since the 6th century, as can be seen by the large multivallate enclosure at Garranes, Co. Cork (see Ó Ríordáin 1942).

Settlement enclosures played a range of social and ideological roles, usually defining household groups and being associated with particular kingroups in the wider settlement landscape, but also signalling through their architecture aspects of social ranking. Some sites may have been the residences of kings or lords, but the ordinary commoners also built and occupied their own enclosures. In a sense, the enclosure's banks, ditches, palisades and walls and their scales

served to define in social, ideological and architectural terms, the household, kin-group or extended communities that inhabited it.

In chronological terms, we see no large-scale innovation of the use of 'defended enclosures' in Ireland in the 9th and 10th centuries. The inhabitation of settlement enclosures in Ireland towards the end of the early medieval period is often as much about continuity of use, or episodic re-use, since the 6th century, as it is about change or innovation. It is possible that some raths, particularly raised raths, cashels and crannógs in the 9th–10th centuries were of a distinctive form that emerged in these centuries, but they too were based on more ancient sites.

In fact, if we were to focus on 9th- and 10th-century defended or fortified enclosures distinctly associated with military activities in Ireland, it is likely that most Irish archaeologists look to the Viking raiding bases or *longphuirt* of the mid- and later 9th century, and the later Viking town defences of Dublin, Waterford and other places, which themselves were also regarded or treated as fortresses. Although some few early medieval Irish monastic enclosures were no doubt striking places to visit and walk through, one suspects that the Viking towns of Ireland were among the wonders of the world to the early medieval Irish who had the fortune – or misfortune – to encounter them for the first time as they entered the town gates, seeing their creolised populations living close together in their houses, with their crowded, smelly and dirty streets, and the noise and different spoken languages of Ireland's earliest urban settlements ringing in their ears.

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3

Fortified Settlement and the Emergence of Kingdoms in Northern Scotland in the First Millennium AD

Gordon Noble

Introduction: The Emergence of Fortified Sites in Northern Britain

The 5th and 6th centuries in northern Britain are a key period when historical sources increase in frequency for the societies that had lived north of the Roman frontier (Evans 2008; Fraser 2009; Woolf 2007). The literary sources suggest that this was also a transformative period with the emergence of more developed systems of rulership and social structure, with the first references to kings and kingdoms in a northern British context. Important changes can also be identified in the archaeological record in this same chronological horizon: for example, after more than a thousand years of very limited burial evidence, the dead become a more prominent part of the archaeological record (Maldonado 2013). As well as cemeteries, memorials to the dead and monumental carved stone monuments emerge and play notable roles in creating and maintaining new forms of personal and group affiliation (*e.g.* Forsyth 1997; Goldberg 2012, 155–159; Henderson and Henderson 2004; Samson 1992).

However, one of the most significant changes visible in early medieval northern Britain was the re-emergence of fortified enclosures and settlements (Alcock 2003, 179–199): as in Ireland and western England and Wales, the hillfort formed the material manifestation of

power, a northern alternative (or addition) to the hall as symbol of more developed social hierarchies in a post-Roman context. In this chapter I will outline the types of fortified sites that emerged in the early medieval period in northern Britain and explore some of the important roles they played in early medieval society, notably in terms of establishing and reinforcing new and emergent cultural identities. My case study will examine the role of fortified sites among the Picts – one of the major British societies in the North in this epoch.

The Picts are first mentioned in the later 3rd century AD by late Roman writers who recorded attacks on Britain's northern frontier by aggressors they called *Picti*, or 'painted people' (Fraser 2009, 43–67). Throughout the 4th century, military campaigns were waged against the Picts as they caused repeated trouble north and south of Hadrian's Wall. After the Roman withdrawal, across the period *c*. AD 400–900, the kingdoms of the Picts became some of the most powerful political groups in northern Britain. At the height of Pictish cultural expansion, Pictish influence was felt across an area (and perhaps territory) that stretched from the Firth of Forth in the south to Orkney and Shetland in the north and from the east coast to the northern Hebrides in western Scotland (see Fraser 2009; Woolf 2007).

But the Picts were just one of the many early medieval peoples of what we now identify as Scotland or northern Britain – after all, this was an intense period of competing social, political and cultural identities: to the west lay the Scots, Gaelic-speaking peoples with strong connections to Ireland (Campbell 2001); in the south west of modern Scotland were the Strathclyde Britons; and in the south east, the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Bernicia (Woolf 2007, 5, with Map I.1). From the late 8th century onwards commenced Viking intrusion and subsequent settlements and these had a huge impact on all of the existing kingdoms, but particularly in the far north where the earldoms of Orkney and Caithness were established in areas that were either part of Pictland or strongly influenced by Pictish overlords (Woolf 2007, 275–311). By the 10th century the Picts and the Scots had merged into the Kingdom of Alba and references to a Pictish identity disappear (Evans 2014, 101).

All of the early medieval societies of Scotland, with the possible exception of the Vikings, were united by – or rather shared in – the construction of defended settlements from at least the 5th or 6th

century AD onwards. Discussion below will accordingly consider a wider period than the theme of this volume, ranging from the re-emergence of forts in the mid-1st millennium AD onwards; noticeable, however, is the growing recognition that such defended settlements became rarer in Pictland across time, despite an increasing presence of Viking influence – which elsewhere of course led other kingdoms to create new forms of fortified settlement such as the *burhs* in later 9th-century Anglo-Saxon Wessex (see Christie, this volume).

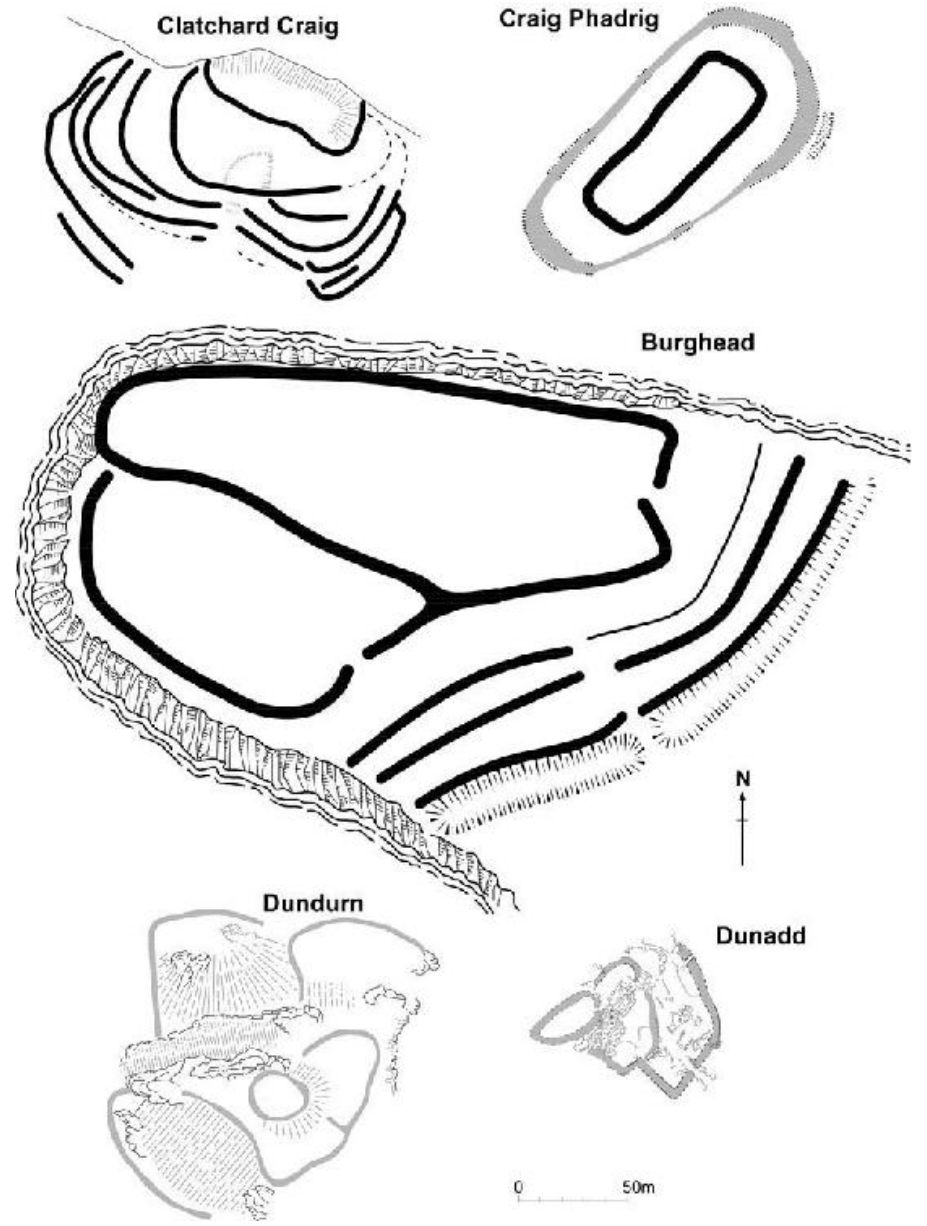

Figure 3.1. Comparative plans of fortified sites in Pictland compared with Dunadd in western Scotland (Plans redrawn from Alcock 2003, Figures 55, 56 and 60).

Fortified Settlements in Pictland

Research on the Picts, once seen as the darkest of the 'Dark Age' societies in northern Britain, is now slowly beginning to drive important research agendas on the character of defended settlement in early medieval Scotland. At least three main types of fortified enclosure can be identified in Pictland: 'nuclear' hillforts, smaller 'ringforts' and coastal promontory forts. These types of enclosure closely match similar forms found across northern and western Britain and Ireland in the early medieval period.

(i) 'Nuclear' hillforts

The most famous of the Pictish fortified enclosures are the hilltop enclosures often known as 'nuclear' hillforts. These sites are characterised by a hierarchical layout, with a series of terraces and enclosures at different heights but with a central (and higher) enclosure of seemingly greater significance and a series of lower enclosures radiating from this central nucleus (A site type first labelled and explored by Stevenson 1949. Such sites exist beyond Pictland, of course, with a prominent example being Dunadd in western Scotland, a multivallate fort on a prominent rocky hill, identified as the principal seat of the Scots of Dál Riata: Lane and Campbell 2000). In terms of numbers, less than ten have been radiocarbon dated, but more have been proposed through their morphology (Ralston 2004). The most extensively investigated are Dundurn in Perthshire and Clatchard Craig, Fife.

Excavations at the nuclear hillfort at Dundurn, Perthshire in 1976–77 (Fig. 3.1) were conducted as part of Leslie Alcock's long-term programme of excavating historically documented early medieval fortifications in western and northern Britain. His programme of work in Scotland was conceived in 1973 and involved 'keyhole' excavation with the objective of documenting early medieval activity (Alcock and Alcock 1990, 216). Dundurn is one of the few Pictish sites referred to in early documents – the Annals of Ulster relate its siege in AD 683 (AU 683.3). At Dundurn, Alcock's keyhole excavations revealed a prominent summit citadel enclosure with a series of lower enclosures

on top of a craggy outcrop overlooking the upper Earn river valley (Alcock *et al.* 1989). Like most early medieval forts in Scotland the overall site was small – the outer terraces occupy an area covering three hectares in maximum extent, but the defences may not all date to the same period. The summit citadel itself was only around 35 × 25 m in diameter, with 4.0 m thick timber-laced walls.

Alcock suggested that the site may have originated as a palisaded enclosure in the 5th or 6th centuries AD, subsequently replaced with the construction of the stone-built summit citadel. The fort was then later expanded through the construction of terrace walls and the rebuilding of the citadel defence over the coming centuries, with the entire sequence extending into the 8th or 9th century AD. Evidence of the primary palisade consisted of rock-cut grooves across the upper terrace as well as preserved timbers found in waterlogged deposits in a trench cut across the upper terrace defences. These timbers included a massive oak beam and thinner oak planks, some with evidence for wooden peg fasteners.

The wooden elements of the timber-laced rampart of the upper citadel at Dundurn had been secured using large iron nails or spikes up to 170 mm long – over a hundred of these were found in Alcock's small trench over the summit enclosure. The front face of the rampart consisted of horizontal timbers laid in rock-cut grooves. This nailed-timbered rampart was in turn destroyed and replaced by a more massive stone-built rampart. Inside, re-used Roman masonry and other structural evidence suggested a number of buildings. The evidence for material culture from Dundurn was limited due to the scale of excavation and overall poor preservation in most contexts. However, one sherd of E-ware, another sherd of a vessel from the Rhineland and two sherds of imported glass indicate Continental connections. Other finds, which included quern stones and whetstones, a glass boss, a spindle whorl, bone pins and a leather shoe, hint at some of the activities carried out in the fort (Alcock *et al.* 1989, 214–221). Given the very limited nature of Alcock's excavations it is hard to say much about the distribution of material culture – preservation on site was also very poor apart from in one waterlogged section of the site.

Very few of the other Pictish forts are named in historical sources and few have been excavated on any scale. The most extensive modern excavations on a fort of the nuclear type in Pictland were

conducted at Clatchard Craig in Fife (Fig. 3.1), in advance of its total destruction by quarrying (Close-Brooks 1986). Excavations carried out by Ritchie in the early 1950s and by R Hope-Simpson in 1959 and 1960, showed that the hill had been enclosed by no less than seven individual defences, but covered an area of less than two hectares. The inner ramparts defined a summit 'citadel' comprising a relatively small internal area. Below, two further ramparts enclosed an upper terrace, while a further series of ramparts seemingly reinforced the upper terrace enclosure. All of the ramparts excavated showed evidence of stone facing-walls and timber lacing. Excavations in the interior of the fort revealed little apart from a hearth and floor surface in the upper terrace enclosure. Clay mould fragments were found in association with, and under the floor and hearth of the possible building here. These moulds were for brooch manufacture of a type probably dating to the 8th century AD. Two sherds of E-ware, spindle whorls, bone pins and animal bones suggest occupation in this upper enclosure (Close-Brooks 1986, 146–147).

There are a number of unexcavated examples of nuclear forts in Pictland including sites such as East Lomond Hill in Fife and Moncreiffe Hill in Perthshire, both of which recall the hierarchical organisation and extensive defences found at Dundurn and Clatchard Craig (Feacham 1955; Driscoll 2011, 256). One site of this type recently confirmed as featuring deposits of early medieval date is Mither Tap, Bennachie, in Aberdeenshire (Fig. 3.2): small-scale excavations conducted as part of path improvement by Forestry Commission Scotland here has confirmed occupation in the 1st millennium AD at a hillfort long suspected to be a Pictish stronghold given its morphological form (Atkinson 2006, 2007; Feacham 1955, 76; RCAHMS 2007, 105–107; Shepherd 1993).

Undoubtedly the 'nuclear' form of some of the forts outlined above emerged through time and through the re-use of earlier remains in some cases. The defences on Moncreiffe Hill, for example, may include the partial re-use of an Iron Age defended enclosure (Driscoll 2011, 256). Other major hillforts in Pictland also utilised the remains of Iron Age forts, such as Craig Phadrig, Inverness (Fig. 3.1), where finds of E-ware and a fragment of a mould for an escutcheon from a hanging bowl, plus a radiocarbon date from an occupation layer of the 5th–6th century AD, all reveal an early medieval phase to the use of the fort.

Noticeably there was also tentative evidence for the reconstruction of the lower rampart during the fort's secondary historic-period phase of use (Small and Cottam 1972; Cook 2010).

(ii) Coastal promontory forts

Studies have also revealed how a number of coastal promontory forts in north-east Scotland date to the early medieval period. The most sustained archaeological work has been along the Moray Firth coast where a number of sites show evidence of use or construction of defended enclosures in the 1st millennium AD.

The most spectacular example of these defended coastal communities is undoubtedly Burghead – (Fig. 3.1). The early medieval archaeology at Burghead is perhaps richer than any other site in Pictland despite the fact that a large portion of the fort was destroyed in the early 19th century with the construction of a planned village and harbour over the remains of the fort (see Oram 2007 for a full account). The fort appears to have covered an area of around 5.5 hectares – the largest Pictish site known (Alcock 2003, 193; Foster 2004, 43). The finds of nearly 30 bull carvings and a fascinating cistern structure are well known finds from Burghead (Oram 2007; Ralston 2004; RCAHMS 2007, 104; Young 1890, 1891, 1893). Excavation at the site has had a long history, extending back to MacDonald's work in the 1860s, who excavated the ramparts of the upper and lower citadel enclosures (MacDonald 1862, 348). Thirty years later, the local antiquarian Hugh Young recounted, in a quite remarkable series of reports, the most detailed evidence for the ramparts, suggesting that they were of exceptional scale and workmanship (1891, 189). In the lower fort the ramparts were composed of an inner and outer drystone wall utilising dressed and carefully quarried stone. Between the facing-walls was a core of earth, stone and midden material (ibid., 436). The two facing-walls were linked or at least bonded to the rampart core by oak planks and logs riveted together in places by iron nails or spikes up to 0.2 m long. Young identified that the lower citadel rampart had been over 7.0 m wide and perhaps as much as 6.0 m high. Further work in the late 1960s by Alan Small (1969) focused on the upper citadel and showed that the character of the defences may have differed across the site. The most recent studies at Burghead by Edwards and Ralston (1978)

and latterly by Ralston (2004) have provided valuable additional chronological and environmental information focusing on the rampart construction and dating.

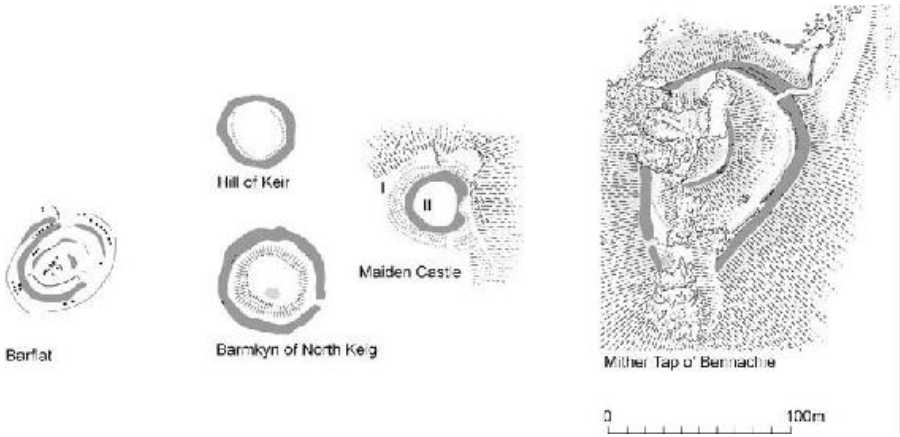

Figure 3.2. Plans of Picitsh enclosed sites: the palisade at Barflat (Rhynie), 'ringforts' at Maiden Castle, Hill of Keir and Barmkyn of North Keig and the 'nuclear' hillfort at Mither Tap (Plans redrawn from RCAHMS 2007).

Figure 3.3. The 2012 excavation trench at Rhynie, showing the Craw Stane (middle left), traces of the inner and outer ditches and the outer box-rampart (top); traces of the internal buildings can also be seen inside the enclosures (Photo © University of Aberdeen).

The evidence from Burghead can be set alongside that from a limited number of further examples of promontory forts with secure evidence for construction or use in the 1st millennium AD; these include much more modest forts such as Portknockie on the Banffshire coastline (Ralston 1980, 1987). Like the inland hillforts outlined above, promontory forts also reused Iron Age sites, as evident at Cullykhan, Aberdeenshire, where Pictish period reuse included both occupation and refortification (Greig 1970, 1971).

(iii) 'Ringforts'

One further type of enclosure can be highlighted. In a classic volume, *The Problem of the Picts* (Wainwright 1955), the archaeologist Richard Feacham suggested that a series of small circular enclosures or 'ringforts' found in Pictland were also likely to be early medieval in date (Feacham 1955). Excavation has been slow to establish that this is the case, but the Pictish sites can now be considered alongside other northern British examples of ringforts or duns such as the evidence from western Scotland in Argyll. The latter evidence includes renewed phases of construction of smaller fortified settlements in the second half of the 1st millennium AD, again in some cases re-using earlier Iron Age sites (Harding 2004, 129–132). In Pictland, excavations at two sites at Litigan and Queen's View first suggested early medieval occupation of small fortified enclosures (Taylor 1990). The Perthshire sites are usually around 15 m in internal diameter with stone walls up to 3.0 m thick. Excavations at Aldclune, also Perthshire, shows that Iron Age homesteads could also be revamped. At Aldclune, one of a pair of ringforts (Site 1), originally constructed in the last centuries BC and early centuries AD, was re-occupied in the second half of the 1st millennium AD; its latest phase included construction of a walled enclosure which finds close parallel in sites dated to the 5th–6th centuries AD in Aberdeenshire (Hingley *et al.* 1997, Illus 2 and 3).

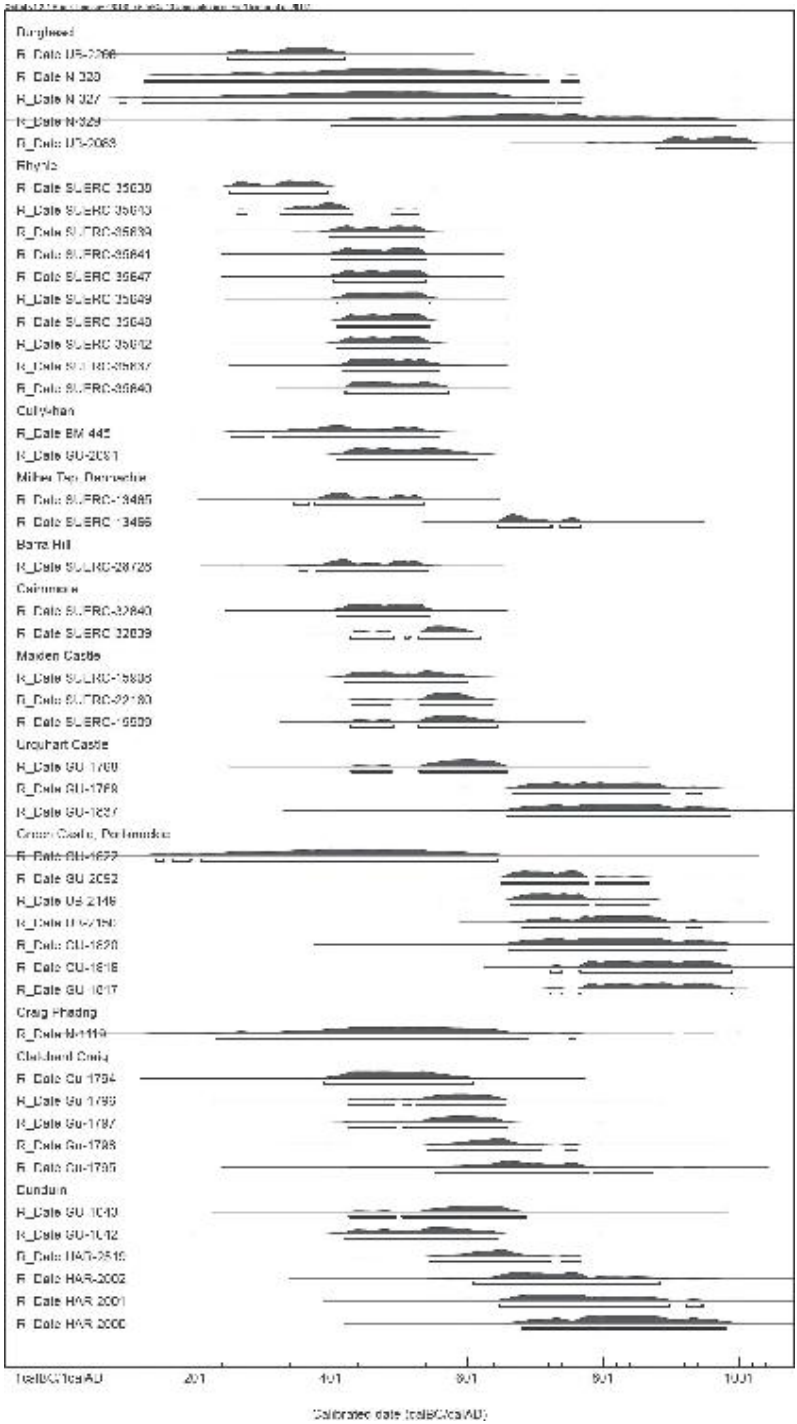

Figure 3.4. Radiocarbon dates for enclosed sites of Pictland. OxCal v4.2.4 Bronk Ramsey (2013); r:5 Int Cal 13 atmospheric curve (From Reimer et al. 2013).

The emerging evidence for ringforts of the character outlined

above has been significantly advanced by recent work in north-east Scotland. While most excavations have been keyhole in nature, these reveal that a series of sites identified by the Royal Commission for Historic and Ancient Monuments of Scotland (RCHAMS) as a distinctive class of small stone-walled defined sites date to the early medieval period. Sites investigated include Maiden Castle on the slopes of Bennachie in Aberdeenshire (Cook 2011a) (Fig. 3.2), which featured remains of at least two successive enclosures – a thick stone-walled enclosure (*c*. 20 m in internal diameter) with perhaps successive phases of surrounding ramparts and ditches (max 40 m in overall diameter). It is uncertain whether the stone-walled enclosure was roofed, or perhaps more likely surrounded internal buildings (Cook 2011a, 27). Test-pits around the fortified site found evidence for unenclosed settlement around the enclosure. Other sites dated to this period include a trivallate fort at Cairnmore in western Aberdeenshire and, potentially, a series of surveyed, but as yet unexcavated, sites in the Don Valley (Cook 2011b) (Fig. 3.2).

Perhaps closely related to these smaller series of fortified settlements is a very recently identified site at Rhynie (also Aberdeenshire). In 2011 and 2012 a lowland enclosure with traces of internal buildings was firmly dated to the early medieval period at Rhynie (Noble *et al*. 2013; Noble and Gondek 2011) (Figs 3.2 and 3.3). Rhynie had previously been well known for the eight Pictish symbol stones that had been found in the village and its immediate environs since the early 19th century (RCAHMS 2007, 119–122; Gondek and Noble 2010). Three of these stones, including one *in situ*, the Craw Stane, came from a field just to the south of the modern village of Rhynie, in a location that is part of a narrow N–S running valley, an old routeway leading through north-east Scotland. The excavations revealed two ditched enclosures and a third outer timber-defined enclosure measuring *c*. 60 m in maximum diameter. The outer enclosure consisted of a deep foundation trench (up to 1.5 m deep) which held huge oak planks and was flanked by an inner setting of postholes. This arrangement probably defined an elaborate timber-laced rampart or box-rampart, perhaps with a wall-walk. The construction of this outer defence may have strengthened or replaced a slightly earlier earthwork enclosure consisting of two surviving ditches, that morphologically would have closely resembled the

upstanding enclosures at Maiden Castle and Cairnmore (RCAHMS 2007, 101). Inside the enclosures a series of beam slots, postholes and destruction layers suggest the presence of a number of timber buildings. The finds at the site include the northernmost examples of Late Roman amphorae in the world, metalworking evidence including moulds and a set of iron tongs, bronze pins and glass from Gallic workshops (Noble *et al.* 2013, 1142–1143). The radiocarbon dating and the artefactual evidence from Rhynie provide strong evidence for a late 5th- to early 6th-century date for the enclosures and internal structures.

Discussion: The (Re)Emergence of Fortified Enclosure on Northern Britain

The short summary above highlights the different types of fortified enclosure that emerged in Pictland, each with plan forms recognised over a much wider geographical frame in the second half of the 1st millennium AD. A recent study has begun to assess the dating evidence for the Pictish fortified sites (Noble *et al.* 2013), and what is particularly striking (and is seemingly a much broader trend elsewhere in northern and western Britain and Ireland) is that the range of fortified sites that characterised early medieval society in these areas appeared relatively abruptly in a 5th- and 6th-century AD horizon – this included the emergence (or re-emergence) of major hillforts, ringforts, promontory forts and more unusual lowland sites like Rhynie (Fig. 3.4).

Ireland shows a comparable emergence of sites in the 5th–6th centuries AD, and with ringfort sites proliferating from the 7th century onwards (Stout 1997, 22–31). However, in Pictland a reverse trend is evident with apparently fewer sites established from the 7th century onwards. The data here are provisional, with secure dating evidence often limited (and many sites dated by older radiocarbon determinations), but the recently identified ringfort sites in Aberdeenshire, for example – sites at the smaller end of the spectrum – show little sign of continued occupation beyond their initial construction phases. However, larger sites such as the major hillforts and promontory forts do, in contrast, endure and show repeated expansion or refortification into the 8th and 9th centuries

AD, possibly under the influence of/in response to the new Viking invaders of the north (Noble *et al.* 2013). What is also clear from the overall spread of dates is that the phenomenon of fort construction began after a hiatus of perhaps up to four centuries in many areas: for example, at sites that show clear re-use of earlier Iron Age hillforts such as Craig Phadrig and Cullykhan there was a distinct gap between Iron Age construction (ending by the 1st century BC at the latest) and the re-building/re-occupation after cal AD 400 (Noble *et al.* 2013, 1143).

The 5th- to 6th-century dates for the enclosed sites of Pictland tally well with the first documented references to Pictish kings in sources such as the Irish Annals and the earliest kings recorded in the Pictish king-lists that can be independently verified from other sources (Evans 2008). The apparent focus of construction and use of larger and more complex fortified sites from the 7th century onwards also coincides with the impact of Christianity, and in northern Pictland at least, the emergence of a documented 'over-kingdom' known as Fortriu (Woolf 2006). Certainly the larger hillforts of Pictland and early medieval northern Britain more generally have traditionally been linked to changes in political structure in the mid-1st millennium AD. Thus the identification of Pictish sites such as Dundurn as the major 'capitals' of kingdoms goes back to 19th-century scholarship at least (Alcock *et al.* 1989, 190). In the mid-20th century, Stevenson, in his definition of the nuclear hillfort, saw these 'citadels' as royal strongholds akin to the castles of later medieval Scotland (Stevenson 1949). Feacham (1955) too continued the idea that these sites functioned as capitals, though this was a view later cautioned by Alcock *et al.* (1989, 209) who rightly pointed out that the much later concept of a 'capital' was inappropriate in an early medieval context; rather, kings would have probably had a number of royal strongholds or 'central places' – among which they would have made periodic circuits or progresses.

Other hillforts in northern Britain such as Dunadd in western Scotland have long been connected to over-kingship, in this case in relation to the Gaelic kingdom of Dál Riata. The hillfort at Dumbarton Rock on the Clyde has likewise been identified as a 'seat' of the Britons in south-western Scotland (Lane and Campbell 2000, 259) – a claim/identification aided by the Venerable Bede in the 8th century

who referred to Dumbarton Rock (Alt Clut), as a strongly defended political centre of the Britons – *civitas munitissima Brettonum quae vocatur Alcluith* and *urbs Alcluith* (*HE*, I.11 and *HE*, I.12). While *urbs* in classical Latin would refer to a walled town, the meaning of these terms as used by Bede is uncertain in an early medieval context (Alcock and Alcock 1990, 116).

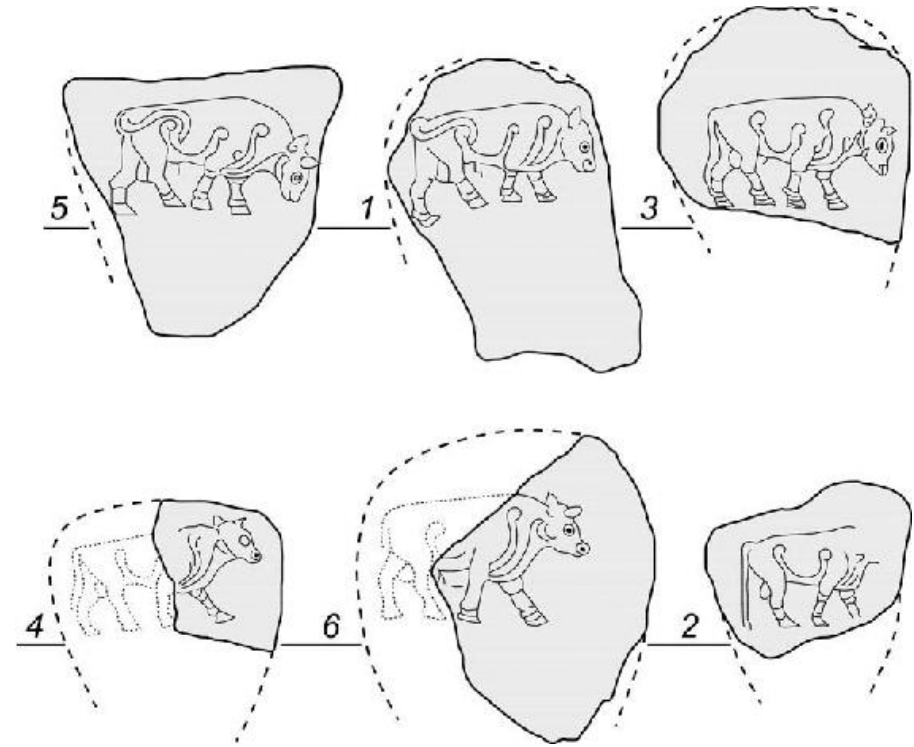

Figure 3.5. The Burghead bulls. (Image redrawn from Scott 2005, Figure 14.2).

The references to fortified sites in Pictland are frustratingly vague and altogether brief. Adomnán refers to Columba visiting the stronghold of Bridei, son of Mailcon, climbing the steep path to the fortress by the River Ness. His account implies that there was a royal hall within the fortress where the king and his council resided, and Adomnán also refers to the royal treasury here (Adomnán II.33, 35). The site Adomnán refers to is as yet unidentified, though Craig Phadrig, located on the outskirts of modern Inverness, has often been proposed. However, the extent to which Adomnán's description of a Pictish fort would have been an accurate one is unknown. In a later period, there is a 9th-century reference in the king-lists that state that Giric, son of Dúngal, King of Alba died at Dundurn in AD 889, but the

circumstances of that death or the nature or status of Dundurn are not given (Woolf 2007, 120, 125). Finally, there are references to high-status, undefended enclosures in the later sources: for example, Cinead, Son of Alpín, is said to have died in the palace of Forteviot in AD 858 (Alcock and Alcok 1992; Driscoll 2011, 270–274). Forteviot is a lowland site with no nearby forts of the character outlined above as yet identified. This would imply that, in the later 1st millennium AD, new forms of royal site emerged.

Place-names can perhaps play some role in identifying the status and role of the defended sites of Pictland. The place-name Bennachie, site of the elaborate nuclear hillfort of Mither Tap, for example, has been translated as 'Mountain of the people of Cé' (Dobbs 1949). The Cé are mentioned in the Pictish king-lists as one of the 'sons' of Cruithne, father of the Picts. The place-name evidence suggests Bennachie was perhaps the pre-eminent site in this region of Pictland. The placename Rhynie derives from early Celtic (Pictish) *rīg*, 'king' (Watson 1926, 34–35; Simon Taylor, pers. comm.). Given the finds of imported Mediterranean pottery, the scale and character of the fortified enclosures and the distinct concentration of carved stone monuments at Rhynie, the place-name seems a fitting identifier for an important early royal site.

The historical, place-name and, increasingly, archaeological evidence suggest that the fortified sites of Pictland were connected to emerging social and political hierarchies. Nonetheless, the exact role that these forts played among these remains debated. Despite the oft-mooted role as seats of kings, there is actually little definitive settlement evidence at many of these sites. At Dundurn, the evidence of settlement included midden and floor levels and a stone-slab water-tank covered by a mass of bracken, moss and detritus preserved by waterlogging on the upper terrace, below the main citadel (Alcock *et al.* 1989, 202). Excavations in the upper citadel were very limited, but some evidence for structures and occupation was identified. At Clatchard Craig, Fife, a hearth and floor were identified dating to the 8th century or later, but few other structural traces were traced, despite the relatively large areas investigated (Close-Brooks 1986). Buildings were identified within Burghead by Young in the 19th century, but these are undated and minimal structural details can be gleaned from his report and few finds of the character found at more

modest sites like Rhynie were identified (Young 1893). Little more than midden layers have been identified at sites such as Craig Phadrig and Cullykhan (both Inverness-shire), and while a possible 'hall' of modest proportions and materials was excavated at the promontory fort at Portknockie, Moray, few finds or structural detail were identified to illuminate site status, function or date (Ralston 1987). The scale of excavation at these sites has admittedly been frustratingly slight and, undoubtedly, larger-scale excavations will reveal more about the internal workings of these forts. However, elsewhere in early medieval northern Britain the evidence for buildings within these enclosures has also been limited. In western Scotland, for example, at the much more extensively excavated 'royal' site of Dál Riata at Dunadd, secure traces of buildings have eluded both extensive antiquarian excavators and (more limited) modern campaigns of excavations (Lane and Campbell 2000). Clearly much more work is required to identify if these sites were truly seats of kings or whether they played more specialised roles (cf. Woolf 2007, 29–30).

The documentary sources, by contrast, emphasise the military roles of forts rather than their residential dimensions. Hence, the Annals of Ulster in the later 7th–8th centuries AD feature over 20 references to forts or strongholds in northern Britain, nearly all in connection with military action such as sieges, burnings, destruction and capture (Alcock 1988, 31). The scale of the defences of the major hillforts, the repeated textual references to their role in warfare as well as the clear archaeological evidence for the burning of defences leave us in little doubt that it was with warfare in mind that these sites were created. However, their role in a military sense would have been limited in early medieval warfare – where battles are recorded, these are almost exclusively battles in the open between two armies. The effective control of a territory that forts could dictate was also curtailed by the very limited range of early medieval weaponry and tactics (Alcock 2003, 198–199). Clearly, despite their obvious military dimensions, forts would have only been one element of the control of a territory and retreating to such a location may have been a last resort of a ruler under severe pressure and threat. Nonetheless, the visibility and high defences of the fortified sites were no doubt markers of authority in these contested landscapes.

As well as residence and warfare, defended sites performed other

important roles. At Dunadd, a stone footprint carved on an outcrop within the fort has been interpreted as part of inauguration rituals (Lane and Campbell 2000, 247–249). No such carved footprints are yet known in Pictland with the possible exception of a pair at Clickhimin in Shetland (Hamilton 1968, 75). Much better known in our study area are carved stone monuments in association with sites such as Burghead and Rhynie. At Burghead, during the 19th-century destruction of the fort, around 25–30 stones carved with bulls were recognised at the fort (Fig. 3.5). Sadly, only six of these survive but they show bulls depicted in different ways – one at rest, another with head lowered, ready to charge, for example. Interpretation of the bulls has varied: some scholars (*e.g.* Shepherd 1986, 133; Carver 1999, 30–31) suggest that they were set into the ramparts as symbols of power; others (*e.g.* Foster 2004, 43–44) propose connections with a cult of fertility, with these bull stones displayed as part of a votive frieze. The idea of display as part of the ramparts is an attractive one, but is unproven and forms part of an interpretation that only emerged in the 1990s (Ralston 2004, 38). The shape and form of the stones in fact indicate that the original forms of these monuments were kite-shaped boulders with the carvings on the upper and wider portion of the stones (Scott 2005, 217). The lower, pointed parts suggest that these were standing stones. Accordingly, it seems most likely that the bull stones were set in the ground, perhaps forming, as Alcock (2003, 197) has proposed, a processional arrangement, lining the entrance passage through the outer ramparts.

The obvious symbolism of the bull – the muscular, aggressive and dominant leader of the herd – might form a highly appropriate symbol of power and authority at a major hillfort of this period. In addition, the bull may have had cult dimensions (Foster 2004, 44). Indeed, the occurrence of later sculptural fragments of a corner post of a box-shrine at Burghead, displaying a hunt scene, points to an important and high-status early Christian site at Burghead in the later 1st millennium AD. A fragment of an interlaced cross-slab with a mounted rider on the other side and other smaller fragments of early medieval carved stone monuments provide further evidence of an early church here. It is intuitive to suggest that the bulls belong to the fort's early 5th–6th century AD phase while the Christian sculpture came as part of the site's evolution in the 7th–9th centuries. Accepting this

chronology connects the bulls to a pre- or proto-Christian period and the overtly Christian sculpture to part of an increasing association between Church and kingship from the 7th century onwards.

An ideological and ritualised dimension has also been suggested for the emerging evidence from Rhynie (Noble *et al.* 2013), where carved stone monuments with no obvious Christian influence are found in association with a fortified site of the 5th–6th century. The Craw Stane, a stone carved with a salmon and Pictish beast, stands at what may have been one of the earlier entrances to the fort; the 'Rhynie Man' (Fig. 3.6a), a carving of a human-like figure carrying an axe, was found during ploughing a short distance downslope. The axe that the Rhynie Man carries has been compared to one found in the Sutton Hoo ship burial. The Sutton Hoo axe has recently been interpreted as an axe for sacrificing cattle and as a symbol of sacral kingship in a pagan context (Dobat 2006). The Rhynie site also has some unusual metalwork, notably a unique miniature iron axe pin (Fig. 3.6b). This site may blur the lines between settlement and cult centre in a pagan context.

Figures 3.6a and 3.6b. Detail of the 'Rhynie Man' stone and x-ray of the axe pin from the Rhynie site excavations (Top photo © Aberdeenshire Archaeology Service; bottom photo © University of Aberdeen).

One of the important roles of kings in an early medieval context was their role as leader in cult and religion – a role that may have been altered with the conversion to Christianity. Scandinavian central places may be good comparisons to Rhynie in this respect: sites such as Uppåkra in Scania and Gudme ('Home of the gods') in south-east Funen, Denmark, suggest high-status sites in mid-1st millennium AD contexts, which were a mixture of elite farms, market and trading places and places for more specialised and perhaps ceremonial purposes (Larsson 2007, 11; Nielsen *et al.* 1997). In particular, the character of finds from a number of these central places and emerging evidence for specialised, perhaps 'cult', buildings imply that ritual formed an important element of political authority at these sites (Ringtved 1999, 50; Watt 1999). Indeed, Hedeager (1999, 151) has argued that new types of political authority in the 5th–6th centuries in Scandinavia were rooted in a new religious authority where access to the world of the gods was crucial. In Ireland, too, the ritualised dimensions of rulership and fortified sites is well known (including in a Christian context): hence at a royal site such as Lagore crannog, evidence of human and animal sacrifice has been found; and bull sacrifice appears to have been a component of the inauguration of kings at Tara (Gleeson 2012, 4, 18). Like Scandinavia and Ireland, the evidence from Pictish sites also indicates that an important element of the emergence of fortified sites in Pictland may have been their role in cult and ceremony. Interestingly, Adomnán's account of the Pictish king, Bridei's fortress near Loch Ness, states that a druid resided with the king and that Saint Columba battled with him (II.33). Through

time, the implication is the druids in the king's court were replaced by representatives of the Christian faith who helped establish Christian centres that began to form important foci to sites such as Burghead. Thus, in a Christian context as well as in a pagan one, the power of fortified sites of the type outlined above did not simply rely on their military roles, nor in their role as elite residences, but as sites where the ritualised and spiritual dimensions of rulership were conducted, embodied and underpinned.

Conclusions

The fortified sites that were constructed in northern Britain in the 1st millennium AD emerged in the generations after the Roman withdrawal from Britain and in many regions after a major hiatus in fort building in the Roman Iron Age period. These fortified sites can perhaps be directly linked to the emergence of new forms of political authority that emerged in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. The early sources, although schematic and vague in places, make it clear that these sites were deeply connected to the form and character of early medieval society. Some sites may have played important roles as seats or strongholds of powerful kings and sub-kings and the written sources also make it clear that these were places of conflict and military conquest. The ideological and cult dimension to fortified sites in northern Britain was also clearly important and these latter characteristics are important dimensions that should be addressed in future work.

The emergence and evolution of these sites is another important research avenue that can begin to be drawn out. The dating evidence suggests that different kinds of fortified sites co-existed, particularly in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. Unpicking the relationship between these different forms of site will be key in creating more nuanced understandings of the diverse roles that fortified sites played in the creation of early medieval societies in northern Britain. Assessing how some of these sites diminished in importance is also a key research area. The dating evidence currently signifies that a majority of these sites were largely abandoned or certainly no longer witnessed major construction events in the 9th century AD or later – hence their role in the Viking Age was clearly lessened, despite the evident rise in social unrest and political upheaval in this period. Might we envisage a

nucleation of authority and defence in fewer sites in 8th- to 10th-century Pictland? There is only very limited evidence for the construction of defended enclosures by the Vikings themselves in what is now Scotland. It may be that the arrival of Viking influence heralded new forms of warfare and elite identity that no longer centred on the construction and use of defended settlements. However, the noted reference to lowland sites such as Forteviot in a 9th-century context also suggests that new forms of royal centres were emerging then. Thus, after almost 500 years, the fort and the fortified settlement in the later 1st millennium AD began to take on lesser roles in creating and maintaining the social hierarchies of the early medieval North.

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4

Defended Settlement in Early Medieval Wales: Problems of Presence, Absence and Interpretation

Andy Seaman

Introduction

The remains of defended settlements are a common feature of the Welsh landscape, but a remarkably small number can be attributed to the early medieval period. Indeed, despite several decades of concerted research, less than 25 early medieval settlements, defended or otherwise, have been firmly identified, and few of these have been excavated and published to modern standards (see Edwards and Lane 1988; Edwards *et al.* 2011). We can be confident that the Welsh landscape was occupied and exploited between the 5th and 11th centuries (Davies 1982), but the identification of settlements, both defended and non-defended, has been greatly constrained by a lack of diagnostic material culture, particularly native pottery traditions (Edwards and Lane 1988, 2). While pottery and glass imported from the Mediterranean and the Continent have aided in the identification of a small but significant number of settlements occupied between the 5th to 7th centuries (Campbell 2007), we are overall heavily reliant upon scientific dating techniques and historical sources for the 8th to 11th centuries, and thus far only a handful of sites have been attributed to this period. The lack of settlement evidence means that our knowledge of even basic issues, such as the location and layout of settlements and the form of houses, is underdeveloped and, as such,

our understanding of the Early Middle Ages as a whole is weak when compared to many of the regions discussed in this volume. Addressing these problems continues to be a major research priority (Edwards *et al.* 2011; Seaman 2011), but there has been some important developments in the years since the topic was last reviewed (Edwards 1997), and interesting patterns are starting to emerge. In this chapter, therefore, I will examine the evidence for defended settlement in early medieval Wales and explore some interpretive models for their presence and absence.[1]

Defended Communities in the 4th to 7th Centuries AD (Fig. 4.1)

Non-military occupation of defended settlements is well attested during the Romano-British period, since 3rd- and 4th-century material has been found on hillforts in all parts of Wales, including Lodge Hill Camp (Newport), Caerua Ely (Vale of Glamorgan), Castell Henllys (Pembrokeshire), Braich-y-Ddinas, Dinorden, and Pen y Corddyn (Conway) and the Breiddin (Powys) (Davies 1980). Some of this material may reflect agricultural activity, but domestic occupation within hillforts was widespread. Davies has stressed, however, that, with the possible exception of Braich-y-Ddinas, 'we cannot certainly demonstrate the existence of Romano-British communities of hillfort dwellers as distinct from settlements within hillforts' (1980, 297–298). Nevertheless, fines wares, coinage and glass from hillforts in the west and north of Wales, such as Dinorben and Degannwy (Conway), is indicative of high status activity, and the Romano-British assemblage from Coygan Camp is one of the richest from a native settlement in south-west Wales (Davies 1980, 487). In south-east Wales, however, where villas sat at the top of the Roman-period rural settlement hierarchy, high status occupation of hillforts is rare until post-Roman times. Construction and refurbishment of ramparts during the Romano-British period may be traced at a small number of sites, including Llwynheiernin (Swansea) and possibly Castell Henllys (Pembrokeshire) and Dinorben, but a post-Roman date is perhaps more likely for these (Mytum 2013; Davies 1980, 450; RCAHMW 1976, 32). Thus Romano-British use of hillforts appears to have been largely restricted to re-occupation within Iron Age defences.

Continuity between the late- and post-Roman periods has been argued for some defended settlements in south-west England, such as Cadbury Congresbury (Somerset) and Tintagel (Cornwall), but since material culture dating to between *c*. AD 400–470 is difficult to identify the case for continuity is ambiguous. In the south-east, the most Romanised part of Wales where local socio-political and economic systems were heavily disrupted by the collapse of Romano-British administration, most late-Roman settlements appear to have been abandoned before *c*. AD 400/425 (Seaman 2010, 47–52, 244–245). Thus the small amount of Roman pottery from Dinas Powys (Vale of Glamorgan) and Hen Gastell (Neath Port Talbot) is thought to have been brought to these sites during the post-Roman period (Campbell 1991, 55–56; Wilkinson 1995, 33). Native systems of social reproduction in the west and north of Wales were not so dependent upon the efficiency of the Roman state however, and it is possible that local elites replaced the Romano-British administration fairly quickly. Continuity may therefore be proposed for high status sites with evidence of both late- and post-Roman occupation, such as Dinas Emrys (Gwynedd), Coygan Camp, Dinorben, and Degannwy (Conway) (Seaman 2013, 17).

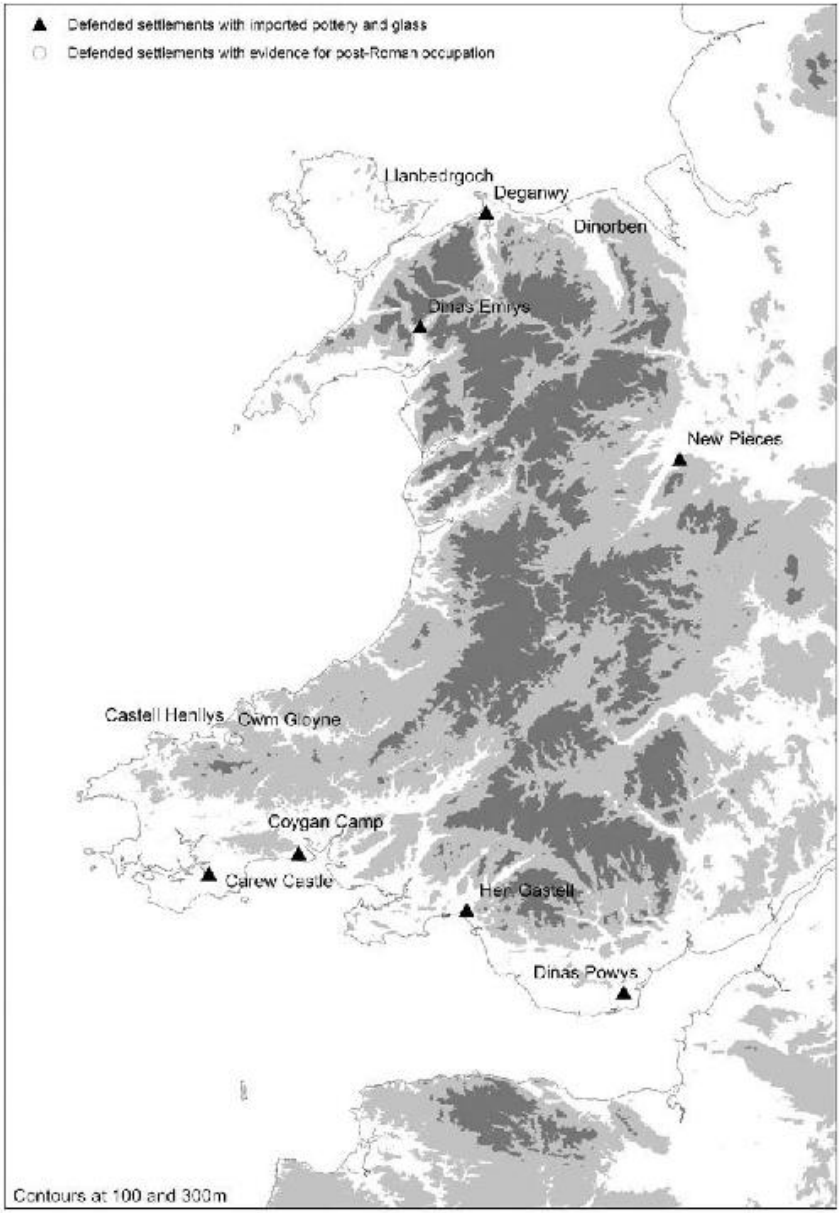

Figure 4.1. Defended settlements with evidence of post-Roman (5th- to 7th-century) occupation (Map drawn by author).

Historical sources for the post-Roman period in western Britain are limited, yet there are some references to what appear to be defended settlements in the *De Excidio Britanniae* written by Gildas *c*. AD 530/540. When describing the plight of the British following the

rebellion of Saxon mercenaries (an event usually dated to the middle decades of the 5th century), Gildas noted how some Britons 'held out [against the Saxons], though not without fear, in their own land, trusting their lives with constant foreboding to the *high hills, steep, menacing and fortified*…' (*De Excidio* 25,1; emphasis is my own). We do not of course know which fortified hilltops Gildas was referring to, but they need not have been confined to eastern England since he had previously stated that the Saxon rebellion affected 'almost the whole surface of the island and was licking the western ocean with its fierce red tongue' (*De Excidio* 24,1). Later, when chastising the rulers of his own time, Gildas refers to Cuneglasus, one of his 'five tyrants', as 'driver of the chariot of the Bear's Stronghold' (*De Excidio* 32,1). Cuneglasus' realm cannot be identified with complete confidence, but it was certainly within western Britain and most likely in north-east Wales[2] (Charles-Edwards 2013, 210). The implication that defended hilltop sites were among the power centres of the post-Roman rulers of western Britainis supported by archaeological evidence. Thus sherds of high status pottery and glass that was imported into western Britain between the late 5th and late 7th centuries have been found at seven sites in Wales which were either defended by ramparts and ditches or located in naturally defensive positions (Campbell 2007). These are: Dinas Powys, Hen Gastell, Coygan Camp and Carew Castle (Pembrokeshire), Dinas Emrys (Gwynedd), Degannwy and New Pieces (Powys).

Unfortunately, there has been only limited excavation at most of these sites, but evidence for post-Roman occupation is well attested at Dinas Powys and, to a lesser extent, Hen Gastell and Coygan Camp (Alcock 1963; Wilkinson 1995; Wainwright 1967). Leslie Alcock's excavations at Dinas Powys revealed extensive evidence for domestic occupation inside the defences of a small multivallate promontory fort, including at least five hearths, drainage gullies associated with two buildings, and rich middens containing substantial artefact and animal bone assemblages. The artefact assemblage included fragments of over 70 imported vessels, 20 fragments of composite bone combs, a range of iron objects including spear ferrules, knives and tools associated with working of bone and leather; and metalworking debris including crucible and mould fragments, a brooch die, and metal slag attest to the manufacture here of fine jewellery in cooper-alloy, silver

and gold (Alcock 1963; Campbell 2007; Seaman 2013). The rescue excavations at Hen Gastell and Coygan Camp were far less extensive, but again revealed traces of domestic occupation associated with imports and, at Coygan Camp, the manufacture of fine metalwork. While trade and manufacture were characteristic features of activity at these sites, this was not their primary function (Seaman 2013, 10). These and comparable sites from south-west England and Scotland, including South Cadbury, Cadbury Congresbury, Tintagel, Dunadd and Dumbarton, have been interpreted as settlements of the post-Roman elite, serving as centres of local and perhaps regional authority (Alcock 1971; 1987; Campbell 2007). Although the Welsh sites are often smaller than examples in England and Scotland, their status is illustrated by the fragments of rare Kentish blue glass squat beakers from Dinas Powys and Hen Gastell which can be paralleled with examples from 'princely' Anglo-Saxon burials at Sutton Hoo Mound 2 and Prittlewell (Campbell 1989, 241; 2007, 60–61).

Large parts of Wales, including northern Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Powys and south Wales east of the River Taff, appear not to have been receiving imports (see Fig. 4.2). Identifying high status sites in these areas is therefore difficult, but a small number of examples can be identified. A fragment of copper-alloy rim-binding paralleled to an example from Dinas Powys, a 7th-century Anglo-Saxon strap-end, and three radiocarbon dates spanning the late 3rd to early 7th centuries cal AD from the upper fill of the outer hillfort ditch suggests high status post-Roman occupation at Dinorben which may be associated with a late phase of refortification (Edwards and Lane 1988, 65–66)– although Davies suggests the post-Roman occupation could have been extra-mural (1980, 450–455). Mytum (2013) has proposed that the Iron Age hillfort at Castell Henllys underwent a major but short-lived phase of refortification during the late- or most likely post-Roman period, which included construction of an elaborate wooden gateway, but occupation evidence associated with this phase is very limited. Near to Castell Henllys, a radiocarbon date of 261–587 cal AD may indicate post-Roman activity at Cwm Gloyne (Pembrokeshire) inland promontory fort, but evidence pertaining to the nature of this occupation is also lacking (Mytum and Webster 2001).

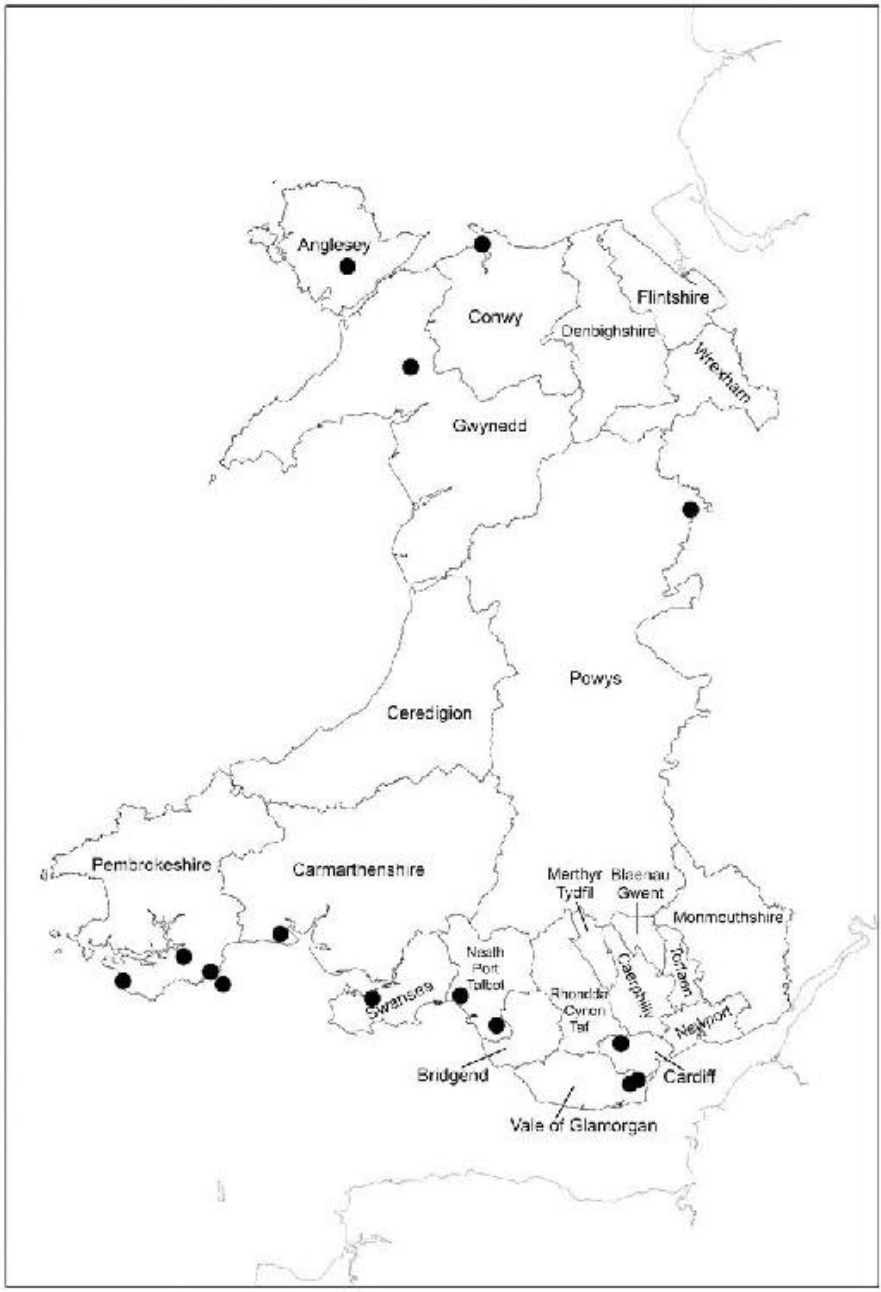

Figure 4.2. Welsh Unitary Authorities, showing distribution of imported pottery and glass (Image © Crown Copyright and Database Right 2015. Ordnance Survey (Digimap Licence). Map drawn by author).

The post-Roman defended settlements which can be identified in Wales do not form a homogeneous group. Some, such as Hen Gastell, were located on previously unoccupied sites, while others, such as

Coygan Camp, re-use Iron Age defences and show evidence of Romano-British occupation. The range of site types includes promontory forts of uni- and multivate form, contour hillforts and defended hill-slope enclosures. Most sites favour hilltop locations, but Carew Castle occupies a low lying promontory above the river Carew. Enclosed areas range from of over 2 hectares (Dinorben) to well under 0.1 ha (Dinas Powys). This variety means that, despite some interesting attempts (Dark 1994; Longley 1997), it is not yet possible to distinguish post-Roman sites from those of earlier and later periods purely on the basis of morphology.

The relationship between the occupation of these sites and the construction and maintenance of their defences is neither uniform nor straightforward. Dating of the dry-stone wall at Degannwy is ambiguous, and it could be Iron Age, Roman or early medieval (Alcock 1967, 200). The dry stone defences at Dinas Emrys post-date the late Roman period, but could be associated with either the post-Roman imports or a medieval keep (Edwards and Lane 1988, 56–57). At Coygan Camp, Iron Age defences were utilised during the post-Roman period, yet were in an advanced state of decay and appear not to have been renovated (Wainwright 1967). In contrast, the impressive multivallate defences of Dinas Powys and perhaps Hen Gastell were established *de novo* during the post-Roman period, but were not associated with the earliest post-Roman occupation on these sites (Campbell 1991; Wilkinson 1995).

The social significance of settlement defences has long been acknowledged, and defences around post-Roman settlements must have served as expressions of political power and prestige, as well as demarcating boundaries and providing protection. References in the 7th-century Irish legal tract the *Críth Gablach* suggest that the construction of ramparts at a king's fort was a labour-due expected from royal clients, and the ability to extract this due was part of how royal status was defined and portrayed in early Christian Ireland (Warner 1988, 59; Charles-Edwards 1993, 345; 2000, 150; Kelly 1988, 30). This model may be applicable to some Welsh sites, and the current author has argued that a similar process lay behind the multivallation of Dinas Powys; however, it cannot be applied to sites which reused but did not renovate Iron Age defences (Seaman 2013, 11). Nevertheless, the re-use of Iron Age defences must also have been

an ideologically charged process (Waddington 2013, 25). Bowles proposes that re-use represented an 'unambiguous attempt on the part of the elite residents of the site to project identities based in the perceived strength and stability of their distant ancestors' (2006, 348).

Contrary to Dark's (1994, 11) suggestion, not all high status post-Roman settlements in western Britain were defended. Excavations on a low-lying promontory known as Longbury Bank (Pembrokeshire) identified an assemblage of Mediterranean and Continental imports, a Class G penannular brooch, and metalworking debris including a silver offcut; despite heavy plough disturbance, post-holes associated with at least one building were identified, and the excavators postulated the existence of a large hall on the basis of the distribution of glass sherds (Campbell and Lane 1993, 62). However, extensive trenching and geophysical survey revealed no evidence of banks and ditches or a palisade enclosure, even though the setting of the site affords limited natural protection (ibid., 28). The excavators interpret the site as a domestic settlement of a status and function akin to Dinas Powys, and although it may also have had a trading function they do not see this as its primary role (ibid., 61–66). Stray finds of post-Roman metalwork and import wares from elsewhere in Wales, such as Kenfig Burrows (Bridgend), Twch Point (Swansea) and Linney Burrows (Pembrokeshire), may represent similar low-lying undefended settlements, although their coastal locations could indicate beach markets or trading sites (ibid., 66).

The small sample size and the bias in the distribution of the imports prevent detailed analysis of patterns of post-Roman defended settlement, but some general conclusions can be drawn. Prominent hilltops with impressive views seem to have been favoured sites: thus Carew occupies a low-lying promontory above a tidal estuary, but would have been highly visible to boats travelling up the River Carew. There is a clear coastal distribution, with most sites set close to natural havens or harbours, and inland sites, such as Dinas Powys, are only a brief journey away from decent harbours (Alcock and Alcock 1990, 120). This distribution presumably reflects the importance of sea transport at this time, and the pre-eminence of these sites and their strategic position in the control of international trade and the redistribution of imported goods (Campbell and Lane 1993, 71). An interesting outlier from this pattern is New Pieces, which is also the

highest above sea level, but further discussion of this site must await full publication of the recent excavations (Arnold and Huggett 2000). A range of settlement types must be represented, but many may be of aristocratic or even royal status. Some of the latter group are 'twinned' with an adjacent ecclesiastical centre, such as Dinas Powys and Llandough (Vale of Glamorgan) (Knight 2005). Campbell (2007, 123–124) has suggested that sites with large numbers of imports, such as Dinas Powys, can be classified as the 'primary import centres' to which international trade was directed and from which a portion of the imported material was redistributed to secondary sites of more local significance via networks of clientship and patronage. This second tier of sites included settlements with smaller numbers of imports, such as Carew, as well as churches, such as Llandough. Whether the primary centres were periodically occupied by peripatetic rulers operating over large territories, or formed permanent seats within smaller territories is debated. Dinas Powys has recently been interpreted as the centre of a small 'petty-kingdom' centred upon the eastern Vale of Glamorgan, but sites in south-west England, such as South Cadbury (Somerset) and Tintagel (Cornwall), may have exercised control over considerably larger areas (Campbell 2007; Seaman 2013, fig. 5).

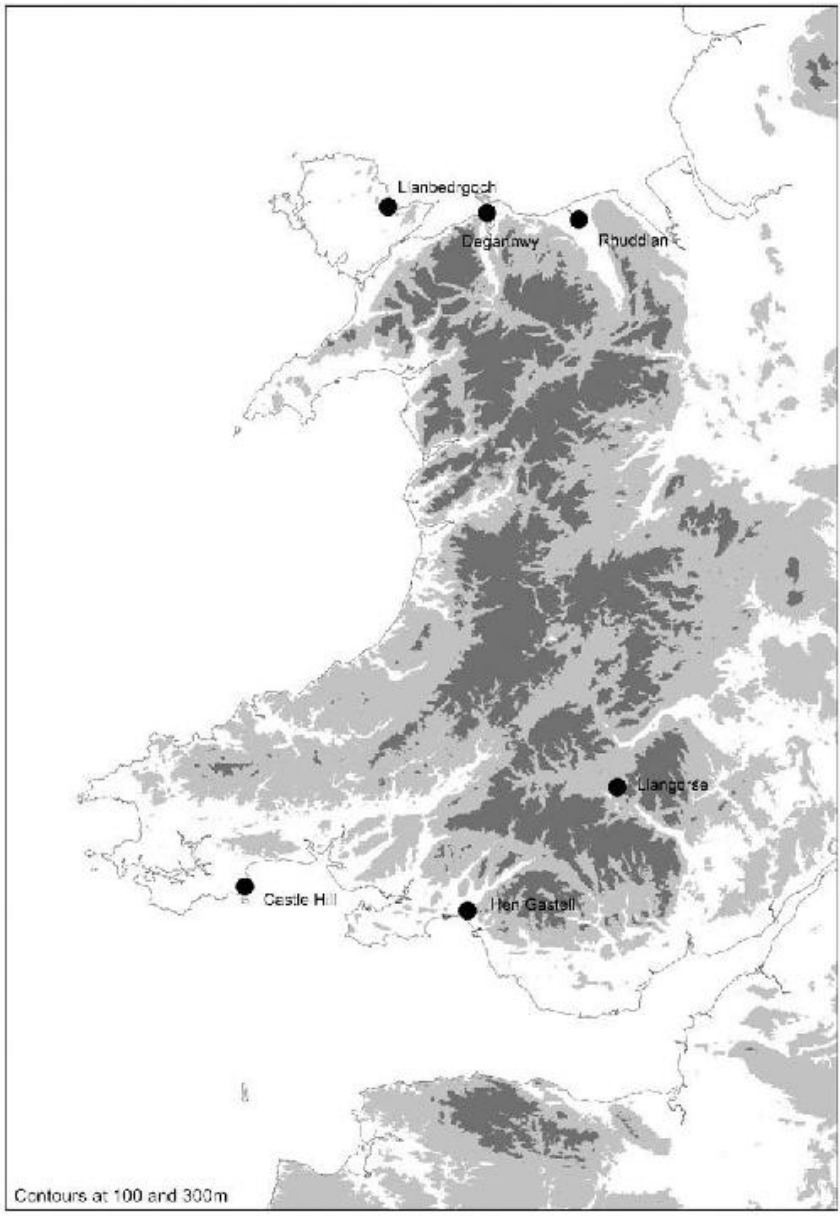

Figure 4.3. Defended settlements with evidence of occupation between the 8th and 11th centuries (Map drawn by author).

The relationships between defended and non-defended settlements remains obscure as very few of the latter have been identified archaeologically. With the exception of Longbury Bank, however, the small number of undefended post-Roman settlements which have been

tentatively identified, such as Drim Camp (Pembrokeshire), Ty Mawr (Gwynedd) and Cefn Du (Anglesey) appear to represent lower status farmsteads. A single sherd of imported ware recovered alongside a Type G penannular brooch and a Byzantine garnet intaglio at the late Roman unenclosed farmstead at Cefn Cwmwd (Anglesey) suggests that high status defended and lower status non-defended settlements were linked through networks of clientship and the payment of tribute and render (Cuttler *et al.* 2012, 258–261).

Defended Communities of the 8th–11th Centuries (see Fig. 4.4)

With only one exception, none of the post-Roman defended settlements with imports have produced material culture which can be dated to after AD 700 and before 1080; historical evidence does, however, indicate that Degannwy was occupied during the early 9th century (see below). While this pattern of silence may be attributed to problems of archaeological visibility after import wares ceased to arrive in the late 7th century, the absence of Anglo-Saxon and Viking metalwork, which metal-detector finds show were then circulating in Wales, supports the idea of a genuine shift in high status settlement after *c*. 700. The small number of radiocarbon dates from high status sites with definite evidence of post-Roman occupation supports this conclusion (see Table 4.1); a similar phenomenon can be observed in south-west England (Turner 2006, 75). This apparent gap in occupation of old defended bases is particularly interesting where sites were either later reused for medieval castles, such as Dinas Emerys, or located adjacent to later medieval *llysoedd* (royal courts) and *maerdrefi* (royal bond townships), such as Dinorben. Similarly, the absence of any pre-castle settlement from the recent excavations at Nevern (Pembrokeshire) – set immediately adjacent to St Brynach's church, the 'mother church' of early medieval Cemais – is surprising (Chris Capel, pers. comm.; Edwards 2007, 60, 62). Greater use of radiocarbon dating may potentially clarify this lacuna, but, as will be noted below, Welsh rulers are rarely associated with named secular centres between the 8th and 11th centuries, and the available evidence suggests that we are seeing a genuine settlement shift.

Table 4.1. Radiocarbon dates from high status post-Roman

settlements.

Site	*Code*	*BP*	*cal AD 1 σ range*	*cal AD 2 σ range*
Dinorden	CAR-130	1475±55	546–640	428–657
Dinorden	CAR-203	1600±65	398–539	329–600
Dinorden	CAR-204	1550±50	428–557	404–605
Longbury Bank	Beta-52349	1510±60	432–613	422–644
Longbury Bank	Beta-52350	1560±70	420–565	379–640
Dinas Powys	OxA-25738	1456±25	588–638	563–647
Dinas Powys	OxA-25739	1472±25	566–620	551–640

Although most post-Roman sites appear to have been quitted soon after AD 700, there is both historical and archaeological evidence to show defended settlements being constructed and occupied after this date. Thus the *Historia Brittonum*, written in Gwynedd in 829–830, refers, albeit anachronistically, to fortresses and also implies an association with kingship (Dark 1994, 38; Morris 1980). In his late 9th-century biography of King Alfred, Asser, a Welshman writing for a Welsh audience, describes the walls of *arx cynuit*, a Wessex *burh* at Countisbury or Castle Hill (Deven), as being 'raised in our fashion' (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 84). Asser appears to have visited *arx cynuit*, and Haslam suggests that he was referring to a stone-faced earthen rampart known as a 'Welsh wall' or *Cloddiau* 'Cornish hedge' (2011, 202; cf. Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 248). The implication is that Asser was aware of a British tradition of fortifying sites with earth and stone ramparts during the 9th century. The *Annals Cambriae* record that an *arx Decantorum* (the citadel of the Decanti) was struck by lightning and burnt in AD 812, before being destroyed by Saxons in 822 (Dumville 2002). In that same year the Saxons are also reported as 'taking the kingdom of Powys into their own control'. *Arx Decantorum* is usually identified with Degannwy, although this is not recorded before the late 13th century (Edwards and Lane 1988, 52) (see Fig. 4.3). Degannwy may have been a centre of the early medieval region of Rhos, and Charles-Edwards has hypothesised that the attack upon it was the result of a Mercian intervention into

dynastic rivalries over the control of Anglesey (2013, 476–478). Nevertheless, its related archaeology is problematic: while Degannwy's western hill was enclosed by a dry-stone wall prior to the construction of the first of a series of castles, this is most likely a post-Roman period build; indeed, Alcock's limited trial excavations identified no evidence of 9th-century activity (Alcock 1967).

Figure 4.4. Degannwy Castle, facing south. Trial excavation on the western (right) hillock revealed evidence of a pre-castle dry-stone wall and sherds of post-Roman imported amphora. The Annales Cambriae probably refer to Degannwy being struck by lightning in AD 812 and destroyed in 822 (Image © Gwynedd Archaeological Trust).

Figure 4.5. The Llangorse crannog during excavation in 1990 (Photo © Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales; © Hawlfraint y Goron: Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru).

The praise poem *Etmic Dinbych* ('In Praise of Tenby') centres on a coastal fort which has been identified as Castle Hill promontory in Tenby (Pembrokeshire). Extant in a manuscript of the early 14th century, Williams has argued that the poem derived from a 9th- or 10th-century original, and Charles-Edwards has suggested a date of composition between AD 815 and *c*. 870 (Williams [in Bromwich] 1980, 156–158; Charles-Edwards 2013, 662). The poem portrays a scene which may have been typical of earlier centuries: a 'fine fortress' called 'The Small Fortress' (Dinbych) where freemen and bards met in the company of their lord *Bleiddudd*, while feasting and drinking wine and mead from 'crystal cups' (Gruffydd 2005). The identification of Castle Hill with *Dinbych* seems firm, and *Bleiddudd* may have been a member of the royal line of Dyfed (Charles-Edwards 2013, 662–664). Excavation on the site of the Norman castle on Castle Hill could therefore be very beneficial.

The B and C manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles record

that in 916 '…Æthelflæd sent an army into Wales and broke down Brecon Mere, and took the wife of the king as one of thirty four' (Swanton 2000, 100). Lane and Redknap (forthcoming) convincingly argue that this is a reference to a raid on the crannog in Llangorse Lake (Powys) (see Fig. 4.5). The Llangorse crannog, the only example from Wales or England, is likely to have been a royal centre of the kingdom of Brycheiniog at the time of the raid. Located a short distance from the northern shore of the lake, dendrochronological dating suggests that it was constructed in the 890s; but occupation may have lasted as little as 20 years, since the excavators have linked a destruction horizon with the Mercian raid of 916. The resources put into the construction of the crannog were considerable, and although the occupation levels were destroyed prior to excavation, sampling of the silts around the crannog's edges have revealed evidence for high status occupation, including part of a small portable reliquary, an elaborately decorated textile, part of a pseudo-penannular brooch, a copper alloy drinking-horn end, and a section of a copper alloy bracelet or torc. Crannogs are most commonly associated with early medieval Ireland and it is perhaps no coincidence that the Brycheiniog kingdom had strong Irish connections (Charles-Edwards 2013, 20). Quite possibly, therefore, an Irish dynasty or a dynasty with close connections to Ireland was responsible for the construction of the crannog (Lane and Redknap, forthcoming).

Welsh legal and bardic sources from the 13th century identify Aberffraw (Anglesey), Mathrafal (Powys) and Dinefwr (Carmarthenshire) as the chief courts of the kingdoms of Gwynedd, Powys and Dyfed respectively (Lloyd 1911, 231, 249, 268). It is possible to associate each of these places with a fortification of some kind (Edwards and Lane 1988, 19–21, 62, 92–93), but we should be wary of back-projecting these into the early medieval period. Pryce's (1995, 65) analysis of the written evidence for Mathrafal demonstrated that there is no evidence that the site was regarded as enjoying special status before the 13th century, and indeed Arnold and Hugget interpret the large rectangular defended enclosure at Mathrafal as a 'typical [late] medieval manorial earthwork' (1995, 173). Gerald of Wales refers to Dinefwr as the chief court of Deheubarth 'in ancient times' (Thorpe 1978, 139), and the site of the castle and hillfort may be the *Gueithtineuur* mentioned in the boundary

clause attached to a highly dubious charter in the *Book of Llandaf*; but this does not mean that it was occupied (Coe 2001, 337). Dinefwr is only 1.6 km from the important early monastic site at Llandeilo Fawr, but there are no pre-12th-century references to its pre-eminent status and excavation has not been undertaken. Aberffraw was certainly the chief court of Gwynedd by the 12th century, and Charles-Edwards has suggested that Anglesey contained the 'seat of kingship' for Gwynedd by the 9th century (2013, 476). An early 7th-century inscribed stone 3 km east of Aberffraw at Llangadwaladr which commemorates a king Catamanus (usually identified with Cadfan, the father of Cadwallon, the *rex Brettonum* of Bede), hints at an early royal connection, but does not prove that Aberffraw was the early medieval royal seat of Gwynedd (Edwards 2013, 180). The earliest record of Aberffraw is a reference in the *Brut Y Tywysogyon* to it being 'ravaged' in 968; the sources are then silent until the 12th century (Jones 1955, 15). Excavations within Aberffraw village have revealed sections of a substantial bank and ditch which have been interpreted as part of a large rectangular defended enclosure of nearly 2 ha. The excavators attributed a re-cut and possible second phase bank to the early medieval period, and interpret the enclosure as the 'chief seat of Aberffraw in the early middle ages' (White and Longley 1995, 18). The sequence is undated, however, and evidence for contemporary occupation has not been identified; interpretation as an early medieval royal court seems based upon the back projection of site's status in the 12th–13th centuries (Seaman 2012, 168).

Cledemutha, a *burh* recorded in the Mercian Register as being constructed by Edward the Elder in 921, has been reliably identified as Rhuddlan (Denbighshire) (Whitelock 1955, 199; Charles-Edwards 2013, 499). The *Annales Cambriae* record a 'battle of the new fortress' in 921, and Rhuddlan is recorded as a borough with a mint in Domesday Book. The site's earlier significance may be attested by the reference to *bellum Rudglann* (the battle of Rhuddlan) in the *Annales Cambriae* under AD 796 (Dumville 2002). Rhuddlan was a 'plantation' settlement, however – the result of Anglo-Saxon intervention on a disputed part of the Welsh border – rather than a native initiative (Charles-Edwards 2013, 499–500). It came under Welsh control in the later years of Æthelred the Unready, and is identified as a centre of Gruffudd ap Llywlyn in the D manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle

under the year 1062 (ibid. 555, 565–566; Swanton 2000: 191). Excavations have confirmed the site of the *burh* and identified traces of several buildings, but no features or artefacts can be attributed the period of Welsh occupation; thus the function of the site, while in Welsh hands, remains uncertain (Quinnell and Blockley 1994, 213).

Early medieval charters in the *Book of Llandaf* refer to a small number of forts, but while there is usually no indication that these were inhabited (they are mentioned as features within boundary clauses – see, for example, *Gueithtineuur* above), charter 221 (mid-10th century) and charter 237a (late 9th century) record the grant estates called *Cairnonui* and *Cair Birran*. The place-name element 'cair' (fortress) may suggest that the estate centres (not yet located) were defended settlements (Charles-Edwards 2013, 286; Coe 2001, 118, 122; Davies 1979, 189). Similarly, two prebends listed in the appendix to the 12th-century *Life of St Codog* include place-names with 'cair' (Wade-Evans [in Lloyd] 2013, 121), but Charles-Edwards argues that this usage of 'cair' is cognate with Britton 'ker' which was used for ordinary enclosed farmsteads in Brittany and Cornwall, and so fortified settlements need not be implied (2013, 286, 606)

Apart from Degannwy, the only post-Roman defended settlement in Wales which displays firm evidence for occupation after *c*. AD 700 is Hen Gastell, located on a small steep-sided hill on the west bank of the river Neath. Small-scale rescue excavations recovered a substantial assemblage of import ware and a type G1.5 penannular brooch, but uniquely for a site with import wares features and artefacts dating to later than 700 were also identified: a hearth, gully and series of post-holes on the summit of the hill gave an archaeomagnetic date of *c*. AD 900 (no age brackets are cited in the excavation report), while an amber disc and string bead, not associated with the above features, are likely to be of 8th century or later date (Wilkinson 1995). A castle was constructed on the site in the 12th century, and although occupation need not have been continuous, it is possible, but not proven, that Hen Gastell continued to function as a power centre after AD 700.

The low-lying site at Llanbedrgoch (Anglesey) (see Fig. 4.6) is the best example of a post-7th-century defended settlement in Wales. The results of excavations undertaken between 1994–2001 and in 2012 are not fully published but an outline of the site and its development can

be sketched. The settlement lies on gently rising south-facing ground around 900 m from a landing place at Red Wharf Bay. Excavation indicated that an early medieval earthwork enclosure, associated with at least two buildings, was replaced in the 9th century by a substantial dry-stone wall 2.2–2.4 m wide. This D-shaped enclosure of *c*. 1 hectare had two entrances, and traces at least six rectangular buildings of Hiberno-Scandinavian form were identified (see Fig. 4.6). The artefact assemblage is by far the richest of any early medieval settlement in Wales and includes nine fragments of hack-silver, 19 lead-scale weights, a pendant whetstone, two fragments of arm-rings, a silver strap-end, a copper-alloy belt buckle with Borre-style ring-chain motif, a cross-shaped necklace pendant, 11 copper-alloy ringed pins, fragment of an oval brooch, two hexagonal bells, and more than 2000 iron objects; there was also a considerable animal bone assemblage (Redknap 2005; 2005; 2007). The skeletons of five individuals (four adults and one child) were discovered in shallow graves in the upper fill of the ditch on the western side of the enclosure; they appear to have been buried together in the late 10th century. Collapse from the enclosure wall directly overlay three of the burials, suggesting that they were interred around the time the site was abandoned. A late 10th-century date of abandonment is supported by the absence of late 10th- or 11th-century coins (Redknap 2004, 155–156).

In his interim reports Redknap (2004; 2005, 20) suggests that Llanbedrgoch was well established by AD 600. However, such an early date is not supported by the published radiocarbon dates and there is a notable absence of Gaulish import ware. Nevertheless, a Northumbrian style copper-alloy annular brooch attests to occupation in the early 7th century (Redknap 2007, 74), and it may be no coincidence that Edwin of Northumbria (d. 633) may have exercised control over Anglesey during this period (Charles-Edwards 2013, 345; Sherley-Price 1955, 111). Redknap interprets the earthwork enclosure as a lowland aristocratic estate centre, and it may represent a class of sites which succeeded post-Roman hilltop settlements (2005, 31). He also notes, however, that an E–W aligned inhumation burial radiocarbon dated to 680–880 could represent a hitherto unexplored cemetery in the south-west part of the enclosure (ibid., 27–28). Thus it is possible that the pre-Viking enclosure and buildings at Llanbedrgoch were associated with a church or monastery, although it

should be noted that ‘cemetery settlements’ without churches are now an established site-type of early medieval Ireland (see Carragáin 2009).

The settlement underwent a significant transformation at the time of its refortification in the 9th century when it also developed an important extra-regional commercial function. Nevertheless, although Llanbedrgoch lies on the Chester–Man–Dublin trade route, large amounts of animal bone, carbonised grain, fragments of rotary querns, a substantial bread oven, and evidence for bronze and silver casting, suggest that the site was not a specialised coastal trading place. Moreover, the size of the settlement, number of buildings, the defences and hack-silver hint at a fiscal and administrative role (Redknap 2004, 164). The settlement displays a very strong Scandinavian influence, but while Redknap raises the ‘possibility of a significant immigrant population among the occupants of the site’ (2004, 169), he views it as a native Welsh site. Llanbedrgoch is seen as equivalent to a later *llys*, an administrate centre of a large estate which oversaw trade and the collection of renders within a region of Gwynedd (ibid., 169–170; 2005, 32–33).

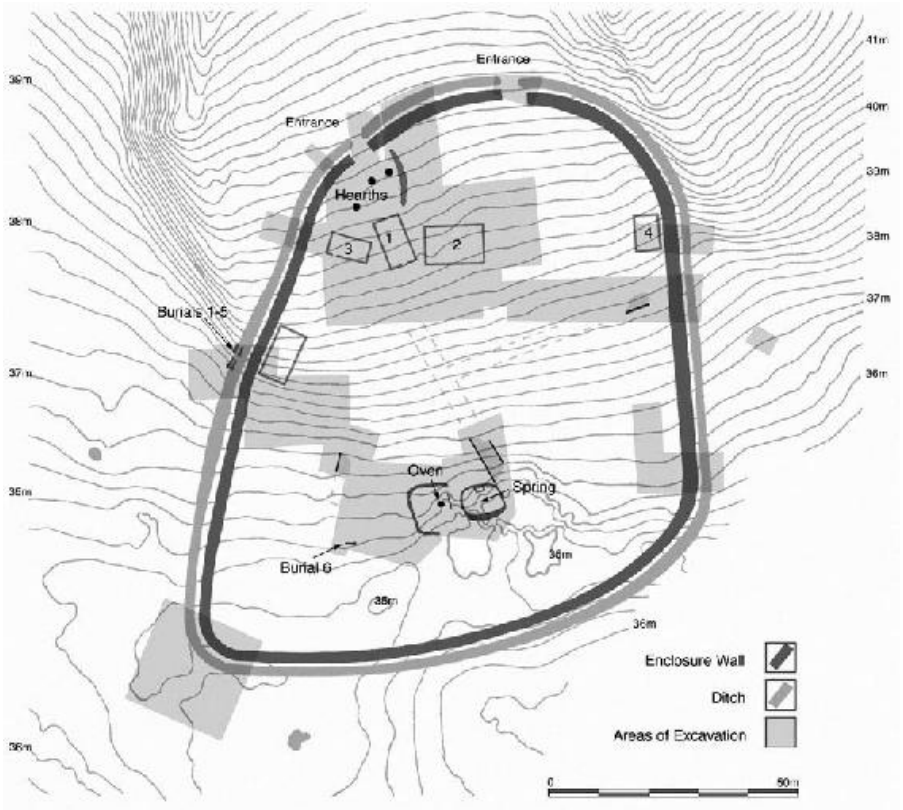

Figure 4.6. Site plan of Llanbedrgoch during the first half of the 10th century (Image © National Museum of Wales).

There are several problems with this interpretation, however: firstly, *llysoedd* were regional centres and so we should expect there to have been several comparable sites within Gwynedd at this time; none of the *llysoedd* of Gwynedd have produced comparable material however, and given Llanbedrgoch's low-lying location and rich metalwork assemblage, if there had been similar sites in different locations, we may expect to have found them. Secondly, the quantity of material from Llanbedrogoch is anomalous in a Welsh context, especially when compared to the contemporary unenclosed site at South Hook where extensive excavations failed to produce any coins or metalwork of 9th- or 10th-century date (Crane and Murphy 2010). Finally, most Welsh rulers appear not to have commanded the resources capable of generating such sites until the 12th century (Seaman 2012). Given the evidence for periods of Viking hegemony over Anglesey and parts of Gwynedd during the late 9th and 10th

centuries it is perhaps more likely that during this period Llanbedrogoch was occupied by a high status intrusive Hiberno-Viking group (Etchingham 2007, 152–153). The construction of a fortified settlement in Anglesey by a Scandinavian group should not be surprising given the evidence for Viking settlement on the island and its strategic position within the Irish Sea area (Edwards 2011). Indeed, the late 12th- or early 13th-century *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* records that Gruffudd's grandfather Óláfr Sigtryggsson built a fortification at a place called 'Bon y Dom' on Anglesey or mainland Gwynedd around the year 1000 (see Etchingham 2007, 150; Jones 1910, 104–105).

Longley (1991) has argued that an Iron Age promontory fort at Castell Port Trefadog (Anglesey) was re-defended during the 11th or 12th century, at which point a rectangular house was constructed. The defences are undated, but radiocarbon dates from deposits post-dating the collapse of the roof of the house span the 8th–14th centuries (Longley 1991, 74). By drawing comparisons to promontory forts on the Isle of Man with evidence for re-use during the Norse period, Longley suggested that Castell Port Trefadog may have been held by a Manx or Dublin Viking who settled on Anglesey under the protection of the kings of Gwynedd (Longley 1991, 84). The radiocarbon dates need not indicate activity prior to 1100, however, and the lack of Viking material culture or Scandinavian influence in the house contrasts with Llanbedrgoch, and so Longley's interpretation remains unproven.

It has been proposed that some rectangular earthworks close to the border with England in Powys may have been established in 9th or 10th century, possibly as Welsh imitations of English *burhs* (Musson and Spurgeon 1988). This suggestion was based upon a single radiocarbon date of 770–1020 cal AD from a buried turf layer below the bank of Cwrt Llechrhyd enclosure, and the similarity of these sites to Mathrafal, which was identified as the pre-Norman seat of the Powys. However, the latter claim is now rejected (see above), and the date from Cwrt Llechrhyd only provides a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the enclosure bank which could be much later. Indeed, the evidence from Mathrafal recommends that these sites are most likely late medieval manorial enclosures (Arnold and Hugget 1996).

During the early 20th century a copper-alloy ring pin of 6th- to 9th-century date and a bronze stag (now lost), noted as being similar

to that on Sutton Hoo whetstone, were found alongside material of Roman and medieval date on Gateholm Island (Pembrokeshire) (Edwards and Lane 1988, 73–75). The remains of *c*. 100 turf-walled sub-rectangular huts have been identified on the this enigmatic island, but on the present evidence none can be attributed to the early medieval period; furthermore, recent excavations by Time Team failed to produced evidence for early medieval occupation (Davis 2011; Wessex Archaeology 2012). Re-occupation at Woodside Camp (Pembrokeshire), a small Iron Age univallate hillslope enclosure, may be attested by two large shallow pits, one of which produced a radiocarbon date of 990–1214 cal AD. This date need not preclude activity of the 12th–13th centuries, however, and the 'awkward position' of one of the pits just inside of the enclosure entrance mitigates against domestic occupation (Williams and Mytum 1998, 29). The four substantial rock-cut ditches below the outer ward of Carew Castle have been attributed to the post-Roman period, but a later date is possible; Austin has noted that the ditches may have been deliberately filled prior to the laying down of the earliest Norman layers on the site, and the castle seems to have been designed to precisely encompass the original layout of these earlier defences (David Austin, pers. comm.; Gerrard 1990). The later castle had connections with the native royal dynasty and the impressive late 10th- or early 11th-century stone cross immediately adjacent to the castle points to high status activity in the vicinity during the pre-Norman period (Edwards 2007, 307). The excavations produced no 10th- or 11th-century material, however, and it is most likely that the ditches were associated with occupation on the site of the castle during the Iron Age, Romano-British and/or post-Roman periods. The latter interpretation is supported by radiocarbon dates of 200–340 cal AD from the primary silt of one ditch and 630–770 from lower deposits in a second phase or re-cut (David Austin, pers. comm.).

There are hints of pre-Norman occupation at a small number of other castle sites, but the evidence is ambiguous. Small-scale excavations on the site of the Norman castle at Maenclochog (Pembrokeshire) identified a substantial earthen bank and ditch which was cut by the 12th-century castle wall. A charcoal sample recovered from a buried soil layer below the bank was radiocarbon dated to 880–1020 cal AD (Schlee 2007, 9–10). Maenclochog could have been

an administrative centre for the medieval district of Uwch Nefyr, and in the interim report the excavator proposes that the bank and ditch may have enclosed a pre-Norman *llys* (royal court) (Schlee 2007, 11–12). However, the date from the buried soil only provides a *terminus post quem* for the bank, which could have been associated with an earth-and-timber phase of the castle. Further discussion of this site must, therefore, await full publication of the excavated evidence. The two pre-Norman structures underlying the Norman earthworks at Hen Domen (Powys) have been more confidently identified but were not associated with defences (Higham and Barker 2000, 25–34).

Conclusions

The settlement evidence for early medieval Wales is, as seen, very limited, but it is clear that fortified sites were occupied throughout the period. A diverse group of defended settlements, including re-occupied Iron Age hillforts and *de novo* constructions of the 5th–7th centuries, can be interpreted as power centres associated with an emergent post-Roman elite. Nevertheless, the evidence from Longbury Bank demonstrates that high status settlement was not confined to defended hilltop sites. A lack of material culture means that, after *c*. AD 700, settlements of any form become very difficult to identify, but there seems to have been a genuine shift in the focus of high status settlement at this time. It is possible that some elite settlements lost their rationale with the demise of the import systems in the late 7th century (Campbell and Lane 1993, 71), and the location of medieval *llysoedd* (royal courts) close to Dinorben and Degannwy may suggest that high status settlement remained in the vicinity of hilltop sites, but shifted to lower lying and more accessible positions (Edwards 1997, 3). But the late 7th century also saw the end of the inscribed stone tradition and the appearance of 'developed cemeteries' associated with cross carved stones and churches (Seaman 2014). Similar processes have been identified in south-west England (Turner 2006), and most probably western Britain underwent a period of profound change around this time. While there is not room here to examine this phenomenon in more detail, we can note that the abandonment of Dinas Powys may have been associated with its subsumption into the consolidated kingdom of Glywysing (Seaman 2010).

Although most of the sites which were occupied between the 5th

and 7th centuries were abandoned around AD 700, we can be confident that some defended settlements remained important after this date. Historical evidence suggests that Rhuddlan, Tenby and Degannwy could have been royal centres, and post-8th-century activity is also attested at Hen Gastell. We know very little about how these sites were used, however, and periodic occupation in response to specific threats, such as Mercian or Viking raiding cannot be discounted (Campbell and Lane 1993, 71). The pre-Viking earthwork enclosure at Llanbedrgoch provides the clearest evidence of a 7th- to 9th-century defended settlement in Wales, but the interpretation of the site and whether its use was ecclesiastical or secular, remains ambiguous. The Llangorse crannog and the stone-walled enclosure at Llanbedrgoch provide our best evidence for the 9th and 10th centuries: Llanbedrgoch was a low-lying settlement with a fairly substantial population which combined an administrative role with trade and exchange across the Irish Sea; Llangorse was a much smaller, more secluded island residence and consumer site, but we cannot be certain that it was permanently occupied. But both these sites are unique in Wales and their occupation is likely to have been associated with intrusive dynasties from outside of Wales. Thus, on the present evidence we can conclude that Wales lacked settlements akin to *longports* of Ireland or *burhs* of Anglo-Saxon England, while the native aristocracy appear not to have been investing resources in defending their homesteads.

Longley has proposed a model whereby after *c*. AD 700 the location of high status settlement shifted away from defended hilltops to lower lying undefended sites which placed a greater emphasis on communication and accessibility. He interprets this as a move towards the establishment of the centres of regional administration which came into full fruition in the 12th century (1997, 53). The extent to which stable political units with territorialised administrative systems existed prior to this is debatable, however, and there is little evidence with which to back-project the later medieval administrative system into the early medieval period (Seaman 2012; in press). Moreover, when compared to their contemporaries in England, Welsh rulers were very rarely mentioned in historical sources in association with named secular centres. Thus we may speculate whether long-term political instability combined

with limited economic resources and the delayed onset of urbanism restricted the extent to which power became manifest in secular centres prior to the 12th century. Indeed, we may question whether it is appropriate to expect early medieval 'central places' to manifest themselves as defended settlements. Detailed analysis of the Bayvill area of Pembrokeshire, for example, is starting to reveal a very complex picture, in which a wider 'central area' for the later *cantref* of Camais encompassed a heterarchy of sites, including two late prehistoric enclosures which, although not occupied, were utilised as cemeteries and assembly sites in the Early Middle Ages (Comeua 2014).

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Notes

1 All radiocarbon dates have been calibrated with OxCal 4.2. Sites are located within 1996 Unitary Authorities; for map, see Fig. 4.2.

2 The 'Bear's Stronghold' has been identified as the hillfort at Bryn Euryn (Conwy) in the township of Dineirth (meaning 'Fortress of the bear'). While possible, no collaborative archaeological evidence currently exists and other sites, such as Hero Castle (Dinarth) in Cardiganshire, could be proposed (Edwards and Lane 1988, 27–29; Dumville 1984, 57–59).

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5

Creating Defended Communities in Later Saxon Wessex

Neil Christie

> 'And then after that, in the same year before Martinmas, King Edward went to Buckingham with his army and stayed there four weeks, and before he went from there made both of the strongholds each side of the river.'
>
> (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, entry for the year AD 918)

Introduction

The settlement landscape of England underwent a striking redesign in the 9th and 10th centuries. A heightening of Norse or Viking raids and in particular their inward, riverine penetrations initially witnessed an ever retreating English resistance; but a rallying of effort, a Viking-inspired change in tactics, and the major deployment and mobilisation of native manpower enabled a significant recovery. A new landscape of defence and control resulted for the period *c*. AD 880–920 that was centred on fortified sites of diverse size and scope. While elements of this militarised landscape subsequently faded or faltered, the resumption of large-scale Viking assaults in the late 10th and early 11th centuries re-ignited the defensive apparatus and accelerated the growth of many of these strategic sites or *burhs* into full-fledged urban centres.

This paper outlines various aspects of this transformation of landscape, whose development and consolidation went hand-in-hand with the growing dominance of the kings of Wessex in England. Issues of *burh* design, placement and logistics will be considered, plus current

problems of chronology and of interpretation of these sites and their take-up – or not – of urban functions. The paper needs no more than to summarise, since the last few years have seen a set of hugely important publications, notably those generated by or linked to the UCL Institute of Archaeology's Leverhulme Trust and British Academy supported *Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence (ASCD) Project* (Baker and Brookes 2013; Baker *et al.* 2013), combined with analyses on warfare and strategy by scholars such as Haslam (2010; 2011; 2012) and Lavelle (2010), a new analysis of the formation of the English kingdom in the 10th century (Molyneaux 2015) as well as a major archaeological project centred on the late Saxon and medieval townscape of Wallingford (Christie and Creighton 2013).

Defence before the Vikings

A key issue to first consider is the scale and nature of the conflicts afflicting England in this timespan: the 7th- and 8th-century English kingdoms were certainly not cushioned from insecurity and the rulers of Kent, Northumbria, Wessex and Mercia were frequently at loggerheads, with niggling campaigns and advances/set-backs, plus dynastic disputes, with the aggressive policies of Northumbria first and then Mercia (notably under Offa) enabling supremacy. Yet this historical image of conflict is not fully translated onto the ground in terms of defended settlements, refuges and military installations until, perhaps, the later 8th century, with the creation of the 283 km (177 miles) long Offa's Dyke as a prominent boundary facing the Welsh kingdoms the largest indicator of a built defensive policy. But already from AD 749 under Æthelbald we hear of compulsory works on bridges and forts by royal decree and under Offa the scale of such obligations appears intensified, most likely indicating investment in Offa's emergent urban bases, such as Hereford, Tamworth and Nottingham – many of these new, planned sites, perhaps inspired by sites in Charlemagne's kingdom, to which Offa was closely allied (Wormald 1991, 101–122; Haslam 1985, 19–24; Hill and Worthington 2003; Williams 2005). The scale of operations at these towns needs fuller archaeological scrutiny, however, and the data are too few to determine the character of Mercian defensive strategy – Oxford, for example, despite much good archaeology, still lacks finds to support the idea of a Mercian bridgehead and fortress at the kingdom's

southern frontier (Dodd ed. 2003, 19. On the *c*. 75 km long Wansdyke as a possible West Saxon/Wessex boundary against Mercia, see Reynolds and Langlands 2006, 26–35). One might in fact argue that after Offa such momentum faltered and that attention to defences only resurfaced with the Viking threat from the 840s, accelerating in the 860s when raids began to penetrate inland more consistently (Hill 1984, 32–41 with maps). This, of course, is a period when the former 'open' coastal and riverine *wics* or trade markets like Hamwic and indeed Lundenwic suffer from assaults and local kings either seek to defend these or to relocate their populations (but see discussion in Hall 2000, reckoning on extended 9th-century activity). It is not inconceivable that the development of housing and streets in former open space within the walls in the north-west sector of the royal capital of Winchester relates to an accommodation of displaced groups from Hamwic – the strong recent archaeology here, supported by a host of C14 dates, points to an AD 840-880 date range, and is viewed by the excavators as predating the reworking of the town as a *burh* under king Alfred (Ford and Teague 2011, 187–189, 221–222). As pertinent is the documented Viking attack on Winchester in 860/1 which perhaps prompted local farmers to settle in the defended town: 'And Æthelbert his [Æthelbald's] brother succeeded to the entire kingdom. And in his day a great raiding ship-army came and broke down Winchester; and Hampshire and Berkshire fought against that raiding-army, and put the raiding-army to flight' (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, ed Swanton 2000, 69, for AD 861. Manuscript variants, such as that of Winchester, report the city as 'broken into'). Like the 8th-century Mercian kings, from the mid-9th century, Wessex rulers were starting to muster regional populations and re-stating public work duties (Reynolds and Langlands 2006, 41 neatly propose workforces from the shires of Devon, Hampshire, Dorset, Somerset, and Wiltshire called up to build the Wansdyke; cf. Costen 2011, 47–50).

Vikings Threats and Royal Responses

Within a generation, compulsory services had transmuted into actual military service as the English kingdoms sought to counter the multiple threats of Viking intruders. Being able to draw more fully on manpower, not solely aristocratic, and organising this to cope with

issues of mobility, provisioning, and defence-work was key in resistance to these threats (see chapter 3 of Lavelle 2010); equally crucial was strong leadership and the West Saxon kings Alfred the Great (871–899) and Edward the Elder (899–924) provided both stability and strategy in an unstable period. A principal source for the ensuing vicissitudes in the wake of Scandinavian aggression are the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, which, although annalistic and often slim in detail, offer much in terms of tactics and in names of adversaries and, invaluably, places – battles, gathering points, religious foci, but especially settlements and fortified seats. Drawn up first under Alfred, there is, arguably, a West Saxon/Wessex bias to the Chronicles (Swanton 2000, xvii–xix; Hill 1984, 20–25), but this facilitates a more coherent reading of Wessex versus Viking strategies (these assessed fully in Lavelle 2010). A sample of entries by their year provides a guide to these (translations in Swanton 2000; adjusted/corrected dates are shown in square brackets):

> AD 877 [876] – 'Here the raiding-army came from Wareham to Exeter… And Alfred the king rode after the mounted raiding-army with the army as far as Exeter, and could not overtake them before they were in the fortress, where they could not be got at. And there they granted him prime hostages, as many as he wanted to have, and swore great oaths, and they held to a good peace'
>
> 905 [903] – 'Here Æthelwold enticed the raiding-army in East Anglia into hostility, so that they raided across the land of Mercia until they came to Cricklade and there went over the Thames, and took all that they could grab, both in Braydon and round about there, and then turned back homewards. Then King Edward went after them as quickly as he could gather his army, and raided all across their territory between the Dykes and the Wissey, all as far north as the Fens'
>
> 913 – 'Here, God helping, Æthelflaed, lady of the Mercians, went with all the Mercians to Tamworth, and then built the stronghold there early in the summer, and afterwards before Lammas [1 August] that at Stafford'. Edward built the northern fort at Hertford, 'and some of his reinforcements made the stronghold at Hertford on the south side of the Lea'
>
> 919 [915] – 'King Edward went with his army to Bedford and took possession of the stronghold, and almost all the garrison who had earlier dwelt there turned to him. And he stayed there four weeks, and before he went from there he ordered the stronghold on the south bank of the river to be built'
>
> 921 [917] – 'And then when the called-up army went home, the other went out and got to the stronghold at Huntingdon, and at King Edward's command they improved the stronghold and restored it where it was broken

down earlier… Then still after that, before Martinmas the same year, King Edward went with a West Saxon army to Colchester, and improved the stronghold and restored it where it was broken down earlier…'

921 [917] – 'Then very quickly after this at the same harvest-time, King Edward went with a West Saxon army to Passenham and stayed there while they made the stronghold at Towcester with a stone wall'

922 [918] – 'King Edward went with the army to Stamford, and ordered the stronghold to be made on the south side of the river; and all the people who belonged to the more northerly stronghold submitted to him and sought him as their lord'

924 [920] – 'Here in this year, before midsummer, King Edward went to Nottingham with an army, and ordered a stronghold to be made opposite the other on the south side of the river, and the bridge over the Trent between the two strongholds; and from there went to Bakewell in the Peak District, and ordered a stronghold to be made in the neighbourhood and manned'

1001 – 'Here the raiding-army came to the mouth of the Exe and then went up to the stronghold [of Exeter], and were determinedly fighting there, but they very determinedly withstood them, and resolutely. Then they turned through the countryside, and did just as they were accustomed: killed and burned'

1013 – 'Then he [King Swein] turned to Oxford, and the inhabitants of the town immediately submitted and gave hostages – and from there to Winchester, and they did the same; then from there they turned eastwards to London, and a great part of his people was drowned in the Thames, because they did not look out for any bridge… Then King Swein turned from there to Wallingford, and so over the Thames westward to Bath, and settled there with his army'.

There are patterns that emerge from this sample of entries: for the earliest conflicts, in the Alfredian manoeuvres of the 860s–880s (see mapping in Hill 1984, 39–42), the key efforts were to counter vicious but small-scale raids at various locations, these raids progressively penetrating inland; there are small pitched battles and skirmishes, combined with occasional larger set piece battles – as during 870–871, when Danish forces were based at Reading, having brought a 'great summer-fleet' up the Thames, and when we hear of 'nine national fights fought against the raiding-army in the kingdom to the south of the Thames'; and a few rare sea battles occur, presumably to prevent landings. The Danes wore down Mercia and extracted supplies, ransoms and hostages and pushed against Wessex; Alfred, his nobility and troops struggled to hold on against the enemy movements, but were probably aided mainly by the raiding-armies shifting their focus onto the Frankish kingdom in the 880s. From the end of the 870s we

hear occasionally of new forts being erected, notably Athelney, or of recourse to old, existing seats such as Exeter. This might signify a new strategy coming into play, based on defended spaces – perhaps in part responding to the Viking strategy of holing up in sites like Exeter in 877 or in creating earthwork defences or stockades for their ships, men, animals and prisoners (as at Chippenham in 885) and in over-wintering (see Lavelle 2010, 229). But it is noticeable that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* only really document the use of fortifications by the Wessex kings from the earlier 10th century, both in Mercia and Wessex, especially by King Edward in the 910s–920s (Yorke 2013, 104). In the entries given above, we hear consistently of new works, compact forts, defended bridges, renewal of fortified works and a posting of garrisons. If not before, then this points to an ambitious and planned strategy at work, centred on control of fortified spaces, communities, supplies and crossings. In part this was a military strategy directed against the Danelaw territories in the Midlands; but there may have been a more 'urbanising' strategy at work in the Wessex heartlands – i.e. an investment in larger *burhs* as towns and regional foci (Williams 2013, 150–156; and on mints and *burhs*, 137–138, plus Molyneaux 2015, 106–107).

Another change seems evident with the major renewal of Danish efforts in the late 10th and earlier 11th centuries (AD 994–1016) (illustrated in Hill 1984, 66–71), in which fortified towns and other defended sites are significant players: the Vikings are forced into attacking towns, burning them down if possible (to prevent re-use) or scorching the lands around; surrenders, submissions and ransoms are reported, but Saxon resilience in these fortified sites (many likely refortified/reinforced under king Æthelred II (978–1016), and with additional, smaller 'emergency' or short-term *burhs* created) was key to survival (On towns and military strategy in this 'Second Viking Age', see Lavelle 2010, 216, 235–255).

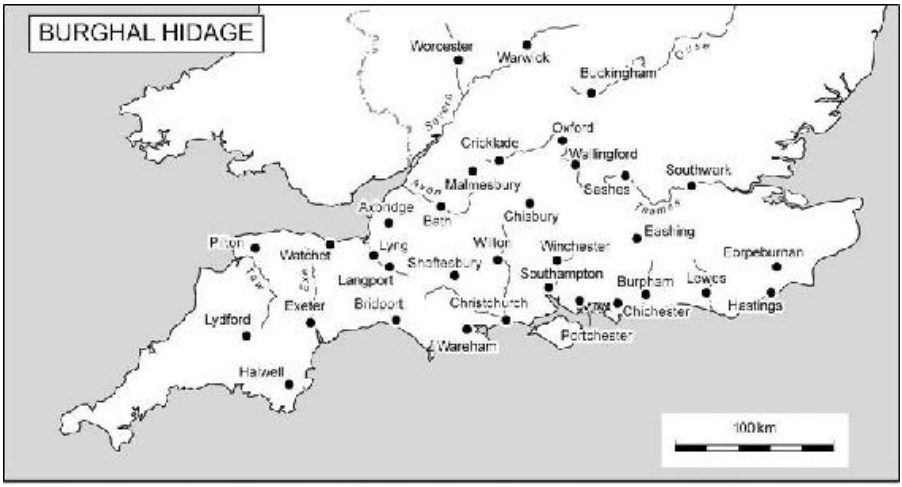
The Burghal Hidage

An elevated investment in fortified sites in the latter part of the reign of Alfred and, more prominently, under Edward the Elder in the 900s–920s is reflected in the listing (as part of a royal memorandum) of 33 defended sites (not actually called *burhs* here), the bulk of these on or south of the Thames line and thus signifying a strongly Wessex-

oriented compilation (full coverage and discussion in Hill and Rumble (eds) 1996. Kent is oddly omitted, however, but see Tatton-Brown 1988, 221–232 on *burhs* here. On the actual names used to describe sites in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, see Yorke 2013) (Fig. 5.1). There is an internal logic to the site listing in this so-called Burghal Hidage text in terms of geographic order (Hill 1984, 85–86; Brookes 2013, 53), running from Hastings in the east to Pilton in Devon and then running back north-eastwards to Malmesbury and onto the Thames, finishing at Southwark; in addition, their placement points to fortified seats in comfortable communication range with one another, with none more than 40 miles or a day's travel (on horse or by forced march) from another. This even distribution has economic logic too, with sites having sufficient hinterlands and resource points (i.e. farms, villages, woodland) to provide food and stock depots for any billeting and support of troops and refugees (see Bachrach and Aris 1990, defining the whole as a system of 'defence in depth'; cf. Brookes 2013). Most valuable is the assigning to each *burh* of a number of hides, such as 500 for Hastings, 400 for Axbridge and 1500 for Cricklade: a 'calculation' presented at the end of the document explains how these hidage assessments can be translated into lengths of walls and the numbers of men required to build/maintain them ('For the establishment of a wall of one acre's breadth, and for its 'defence', 16 hides are required. If each hide is represented by one man, then each pole (of wall) can be furnished with four men' – Rumble 1996, 34). These figures have been used to calculate both the perimeter of the defended spaces and also, the potential garrison size for each (See Gazetteer in Hill and Rumble 1996 for sites and defences and how they fit with/differ from the calculated hidage figures – *e.g.* at Wareham, the 1600 hide allocation would be the equivalent to 2200 yards/2012 m which is close to the estimated actual defensive perimeter of 2180 yards; but for Lydford the 140 hides figure of 192 yards (176 m) is far short of the 340 yds/311 m length on the ground. See Brookes 2013, 55–57 and Molyneaux 2015, 87–89).

There are issues, however: Haslam argues that the figures in the 'calculation' are prescriptive formulae penned probably in the late 10th century as a practical guide for reinstating obligations for the maintenance of obsolete defences of former *burhs*; thus they may have nothing to do with the way that the sites were originally laid out and

instead the hidage values of the *burhs* listed relate to areas of their associated territories, not to the perimeters of the original defences. Similarly, while one may equate a hide with one man for defending a *burh* circuit, it seems extremely unlikely that it was ever envisaged that a site like Wallingford, of 2400 hides, would have held a garrison of 2400 men. Perhaps when the national and shire armies were mobilised there will have been scope for such sites to be used as stopovers and wintering quarters, with troops dispersed to regional bases, and perhaps in these instances the hidage capacity was met by militia. Normally, however, we might envisage far more compact standing garrisons, composed of soldiers (and presumably families) settled in the *burhs*; but proposing figures is difficult, these perhaps varying from 50–150 soldiers depending on site size (Costen 2011, 48. On the nature of such garrisons as a reflection of an extension of warfare duty to more of the 'general' population, see Williams 2013, 133–135). The threat of larger Danish forces in the late 10th century might have meant heightened defensive security and increased garrison sizes, but we have no documentation to show this, nor any indication of whether garrisons remained at *burhs* between the two periods of Danish assault – although it was probably in royal interests to have some formal military presence retained, hence state encouragement to develop many *burhs* as towns and market foci (However, the decay of the ramparts at some sites in the course of the 10th century implies that military 'readiness' was not perhaps prominent alongside efforts to urbanise – Haslam 1985, 49–50).



	ASSESSMENT (HIDES)		ASSESSMENT (HIDES)		ASSESSMENT (HIDES)		ASSESSMENT (HIDES)		ASSESSMENT (HIDES)
1 Eorpeburman	324	8 Winchester	2400	15 Exeter	734	22 Langport	800	29 Sashes	1000
2 Hastings	500	9 Wilton	1400	16 Halwell	330	23 Bath	1200	30 Easting	600
3 Lewes	1300	10 Chisbury	700	17 Lydford	160	24 Malmesbury	1200	31 Southwark	1800
4 Burpham	720	11 Shaftesbury	700	18 Pilton	380	25 Cricklade	1500	32 Worcester	1200
5 Chichester	1600	12 Christchurch	470	19 Watchet	513	26 Oxford	1400	33 Warwick	2400
6 Portchester	500	13 Wareham	1530	20 Axbridge	400	27 Wallingford	2400		
7 Southampton	150	14 Bridport	760	21 Lyng	100	28 Buckingham	1600		

Figure 5.1. Map of the towns and forts documented in the Burghal Hidage of c. AD 915 with listings of hidage assessments (Image courtesy of The Wallingford Burh to Borough Research Project, redrawn/adapted from Hill 1984, fig 150).

Nonetheless, the Burghal Hidage in both its early and late 10th-century components is a valuable resource: effectively we are given snapshots into royal strategy alongside shire or regional capabilities and manpower resources. The *burh* sizes enable some reconstruction also of hierarchies of fortified sites (at least of those listed here) in Wessex, pointing first to zonal 'heads', these frequently former Roman centres equipped with stone walls (*e.g.* Winchester, Chichester) or else comprising new foundations showing substantial investment in defences and bridges (*e.g.* Wallingford, Oxford) and spanning 1200–2400 hides in extent/allocation. But many of the *de novo* sites are strategic, sited especially on the Thames line (or, in former Mercian territory, on key river crossings at sites like Buckingham and Warwick on the Ouse and Severn rivers respectively). We need not view all of these larger sites as prime settlement foci: while some did develop into good-sized towns, for others (such as, perhaps, Wallingford and Cricklade), growth was inconsistent and reflected changing shire and regional economic trajectories (On Wallingford's stuttered urbanisation, see Christie and Creighton 2013, 144, 296, 411–415. On

urban roles for *burhs*, see Van Dommelen 2010 and Williams 2013, 135–145). Instead, some fulfilled a major role in the context of late 9th- and 10th-/early 11th-century defence and control as frontier sites, communications centres, stores and mustering points (Williams 2013, 131–133).

Below this *caput* level were *burhs* sited on road and river lines, defending access routes into the kingdom, or guarding coastal spaces; a majority must also have corresponded to areas of good settlement and agricultural yield, and often tally with royal manors (see below). Many of these lesser (sometimes termed 'emergency') *burhs* were placed in former hillforts or occasional Roman enclosures (*e.g.* for Somerset, Watchet and Bath respectively); comparable, but not documented in the Burghal Hidage, are prehistoric sites such as South Cadbury and Avebury, both enrolled as emergency *burhs* in *c.* AD 1000 (Brookes 2013, 56–57). Often, such sites would persist into (and beyond) the Middle Ages merely as compact villages, although Old Sarum became a Norman royal town prior to transferring to nearby Salisbury (see below).

There is a correlation in some cases with the provision of a fortress or *burh* close to a known/ documented royal estate: thus, for Somerset, Costen (2011, 46–47) links the *burh*s of Axbridge to Cheddar, Langport to Somerton, Lyng to Curry and Taunton, and Watchet to Williton; this correlation in part reflects how the royal estates occupied good land and lay on notable communications lines and therefore the provision of forts was to protect both resources and property, as well as access (Brookes 2013, 54 highlights Athelney as featuring in its hinterland 'the greatest number of hundred meeting places of any of the burhs', giving thus another angle to Alfred the Great's choice of this place as his headquarters in the late 870s–880s). For Dorset, to the south, in AD 900 the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* relate how 'Æthelwold [nephew to the just deceased Alfred]… rode and seized the manor at Wimborne and at *Twinham* [Christchurch] without leave of the king and his councillors. Then the king rode with an army until he camped at Badbury, near Wimborne, and Æthelwold stayed inside that manor with the men who had given him their allegiance, and had barricaded all the gates against him…' Wimborne was a royal estate and minster in early 8th century; Badbury Rings was a prehistoric fort, clearly seeing renewed military usage (cf. Yorke

2013, 97–98). It is not surprising that these royal sites get higher documentary recognition in the Burghal Hidage and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* – after all, the audience for these texts was the highest elite and royalty.

Site Types

It is worth briefly illustrating a few examples of *burh* sites to highlight their location, form, scale and role, and to record also archaeological inputs (As a still valid guide, see Biddle 1976, 124–134). The *burhs* were, as noted, a mix of old and new locations, though for each type it seems likely that there was some level of existing settlement there or nearby, though only in a few cases might one argue for a pre-existing 'urban' community.

In Wessex, a variety of towns of Roman origin saw both action and renewal in the Danish conflicts: Exeter is cited on a number of occasions in the later 9th century, notably for AD 876–877, when 'the raiding-army came from Wareham to Exeter… And Alfred the king rode after the mounted raiding-army with the army as far as Exeter, and could not overtake them before they were in the fortress, where they could not be got at'. Strong walls – perhaps roughly repaired – were evident here and seemingly attracted the Danes. The defences of Winchester had failed in 860–861, but by the 920s the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* signify a prominent city, a burial place of kings. Text and archaeology reveal major royal investment in churches and monasteries, notably the New Minster, under Edward the Elder, from AD 900, likely seeking to upgrade a favoured royal city (Rumble 2001, noting tension between 'competing' kings and bishops). Extensive research excavations in Winchester in the 1960s and early 1970s (see references in Biddle 1976) alongside work in 2002–07 by Oxford Archaeology (Ford and Teague 2011) have pointed to a variety of upgrades, renewals and redesigning: renewal of the defensive ditches and, presumably, wall reinforcement; an inner road line behind the wall circuit; provision of an ordered network of streets, part deviating from the underlying Roman design, but with an E–W spine and parallel 'back-lanes', from which were set regularly spaced, parallel N–S roads and alleys, these all defining 'blocks' for housing, workspace and garden plots. Biddle's excavations at the castle revealed eight successive street surfaces sealed by the castle

construction; he argued (1976, 130) that the streets were laid out as part of a formal master plan in the Alfredian period (with broken flint as a primary surface, with subsequent resurfacings, generally gravel and chalk) (cf. Ford and Teague 2011, 189–190). While the early excavations struggled to confirm the scale of 'uptake' in terms of building of houses, and filling up of plots in the 10th century – but with an strong urban feel evident by the end of that century (ibid., 131) – the Oxford Archaeology investigations at Staple Gardens and Northgate House have pointed to an intensification of occupation and activity in the *burh*'s north-western corner from the mid-10th century (Fig. 5.2), with signs of prosperity in some house rebuilding and finds assemblages (ibid., 73–83, 187–197, 221–222). The same area, as noted above, in fact revealed at least six properties active here already around the mid-9th century and thus likely prior to Alfred's reign; perhaps combined episcopal and royal initiative, following the Danish raids *c*. 860, had started 'filling-out' Winchester. Subsequently, Alfred's efforts may have brought more order to this centre and its hinterland through imposing a *burh* and upgrading its defences and interior.

Figure 5.2. Artist's reconstruction of the north-west corner of the walled town of Winchester in the mid-10th to mid-11th centuries, based on excavated evidence (Reconstruction by Mark Gridley, courtesy of Oxford Archaeology).

Figure 5.3. Air photograph of Wallingford, looking north, with the River Thames meandering on the town's eastern side. The tree line helps mark out the extant rampart defences on the town's south, west and north-west flanks; the extensive earthworks of the royal castle occupy the north-east sector. Note the substantial intramural open spaces (Kinecroft and Bullcroft) in the town's western half (Photo: courtesy of the National Monuments Record – NMR 21393/01, 15 August 2001. © Historic England Archive).

On equal footing with Winchester in terms of size listing (2400 hides) in the Burghal Hidage, Wallingford in south Oxfordshire (formerly in north Berkshire) resembles the Wessex royal city in terms of its overall plan – a (sub) rectangular design (*c.* 700 × 500 m, 43 hectares), set on open ground, flanking a river line (the Thames) – but seemingly draws more on Roman military design for its primary N–S and E–W roads linking the four gates (Fig. 5.3). Wallingford formed a powerful and substantial Wessex creation at the head of Berkshire: overseeing a key crossing of the Thames river frontier – one used by

William I during the first phase of the Norman Conquest and marked now by an impressive late medieval bridge – Wallingford was set up on lands of the royal estate of Benson *c*. 20 km south of the *burh* of Oxford and within 15 km of the royal minsters and abbeys of Dorchester and Abingdon (Roffe 2009; Keats-Rohan 2009; Christie 2013; full discussion of both site and its archaeology is in Christie and Creighton 2013); to the south, also *c*. 20 km distant, is Reading, likely a *burh* from the earlier 10th century, whose strategic position was previously exploited for Danish over-wintering.

Figure 5.4. Wallingford: Bullcroft sector, showing slopes of the rampart and ditch on the northern flank of the late Saxon town (Photo: author).

Unlike Winchester, the interior of Wallingford has seen little large-scale work to uncover details of the late Saxon plan and road system; while an element of a grid system exists in the south-east sector, it is difficult to identify how quickly its population grew. Strikingly, recent excavations revealed no late Saxon activity – and minimal medieval presences – in the open spaces on the town's western side, the Kinecroft and Bullcroft, the implication being that these always comprised primarily open ground, perhaps for animal pasturing, fairs/markets, and initially for army encampments, stores, refugees, etc. (Christie and Creighton 2013, 71–73, 395 – the town's failure to prosper after the 14th century helped to preserve these open spaces).

Potentially Wallingford *burh* was a base of operations – a mustering point, a shire assembly point, a regional supply depot, and its large size was in anticipation of this military-cum-economic role. The town's most prominent early survivals are in fact the massive earthwork defences, well preserved (up to 7.0–8.0 m from eroded rampart top to ditch base in the north – see Fig. 5.4) on its western and northern flanks (ibid., 80–114). Interestingly, there is very limited evidence to show any stone revetment to the rampart top – unlike at Oxford, where such stonework likely denotes a 10th-century upgrade. Also of note is the engineering works that supplied running water to the town ditches and its mills, requiring channelling of streams and canal-work from up to 8 km distant to the west of the *burh*, signifying careful, long-term planning (Blair 2007, 264–266; Christie and Creighton 2013, 82–83, 394).

Figure 5.5. Oxford Castle excavations, looking north-west: the Saxon rampart under excavation, with the facing wall on its south side. On the right of the photo the stepped clay layers of the overlying Norman bailey rampart can be seen (Photo: courtesy of Oxford Archaeology).

Less regular in outer plan design, but matching Wallingford in possessing broad main N-S and E-W streets, is Oxford, a site more strongly served by archaeology for its late Saxon and early Norman phases (see, especially, Dodd ed. 2003; summary in Booth *et al.* 2007, 132–136; Norton 2015). While first documented as a fortified site under Edward the Elder in 911, Oxford is likely an Alfredian period foundation, part of a policy of securing Mercian lands following the marriage alliance of 886 (his daughter Æthelflaed married to the

Mercian ruler and ealdorman, Æthelred); under Edward the *burh* may have been extended eastwards or else seen a first phase of planned urbanisation (on debates regarding the 'two burhs' of Oxford, see Haslam 2010, discussing also the evidence for a defensive reinforcement in the early 11th century). Set just north of the Thames, this fortress (established on land taken from the royal estate at Headington), positioned between the lines of the rivers Thames and Cherwell, helped protect a prominent river-crossing certainly active from the 9th century (Dodd ed. 2003, 32–35, noting water control efforts, reclamation works, revetments). A highly active archaeological unit and an ever bustling townscape have enabled various interventions to explore elements of the late Saxon town in terms of defences, planning, housing and economics. Key to note are data from the northern flank, with the church of St Michael's in direct association with the North Gate – a church-gate association that is repeated in many *burhs* (cf. Morris 1989, 197–198, 214–217; Christie and Creighton 2013, 279) – with its fine, extant stone bell-tower part of the gate's defensive articulation (Durham *et al.* in Dodd ed. 2003, 152–164, but suggesting a date in the earlier 11th century, part of a revised defensive arrangement here). Of high archaeological value were the excavations and surveys between 1999 and 2009 at Oxford castle, at the west end of the *burh*, adding to results from the 1995 excavations at St Michael's Street on the *burh*'s north-west flank (Wilkinson, in Dodd 2003, 140–152, with reconstruction drawing Fig 4.10; Norton 2015) (Fig. 5.5). Each showed major works of erecting an earthen rampart, between 12 and 15 m wide, *c*. 1.2–1.5 m high but topped with timber revetment and palisade work, which was subsequently replaced by a stone wall, built up against the old palisade. Dating evidence was limited, but sufficient to suggest a palisaded rampart of late 9th- to 10th-century date, and stonework of the early to mid-11th century – the latter potentially later than the Danish King Swein's military exactions here in 1013 (see above). Other features revealed included a rearward metalled lane running behind the rampart, while the defensive ditch seems to have been set 6 m away from the rampart front (as also evident at Cricklade and Wareham *burhs* – Biddle 1976, 129); at the castle site, parts of 10th- and 11th-century halls, barns and cellars were revealed and it is speculated that the monumental St George's Tower, long assumed to

be Saxo-Norman in date, may well also be an earlier 11th-century construction; burials here also imply a church presence in what was developing early on into a busy – and possibly royal – quarter before its blotting out by the imposition of the castle.

Lyng stands out as the smallest of the sites named in the Burghal Hidage, with a hidage of just 100; it is one of a group of more compact sites, whose size may reflect a lower level of threat in the area, or else a lower population density. Potentially Lyng was included because of its symbolic role: it was the western half of a defensive pairing in the Somerset levels (Fig. 5.6), whose eastern sector was formed by the island of Athelney, which was the refuge of the embattled King Alfred in AD 878, likely sheltering in an existing small monastic seat. The contemporary *Life of King Alfred* refers to a 'formidable fortress of elegant workmanship' protecting the western end of the causeway here, matching a defensive work at its east end. A monastery was also founded in 893 as a thanks-offering from Alfred for his defeat of the Danes (Richardson 2003, 3–4). Sadly, the archaeology of these late Saxon sites currently remains very limited, and while a planned street system of opposing, roughly N-S lanes feeding into a central (roughly) E–W road is recognised at Lyng, it is problematic to see this as much built up/developed in the Saxon period (ibid, 6–7).

Figure 5.6. View across Athelney to Lyng during the January/February 2014 floods in the

Somerset Levels. In the foreground the raised zone of the monastic site is evident; beyond, off centre, is the compact planned village of Lyng (Image: NMR 27896/045 © Historic England).

Figure 5.7. Image looking across the recut ditch of the Avebury circle (Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ASC_10_db.jpg?uselang=en-gb).

A last example is Avebury in north Wiltshire, a later Saxon fortified site exploiting the earthworks and communications lines of a much older monument (Fig. 5.7). However, the *burh* here was not implanted within the famous Avebury Circle, but set immediately facing its western entrance, with its spine formed by the present High Street (the remnant prehistoric Beckhampton Avenue): of sub-rectangular form, 200/300 × 270 m, it was enclosed by a ditch and bank, the former up to 3.5 m wide, but seemingly only *c*. 1.0 m deep; property lines run roughly N–S from the Avenue (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 198–210, noting also the partial evidence for preceding Middle Saxon settlement). Given that the main road through the *burh* and through the centre of the henge circle is viewed as the *herepath* or 'army road' (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 226), one could speculate that the henge enclosure itself, of 420 m diameter, was utilised in the anti-Viking campaigns as a marching-camp or stores stockade or even refugee zone when required. The immediate

region saw much military action in the early 11th century, with battles at nearby Kennet and Cannings Marsh, and fieldwork by Reynolds especially has sought to reconstruct a wider defensive system linking Avebury to smaller defensive units, such as temporary forts (including one of top of Silbury Hill) and watchtowers or signal stations (as at Yatesbury and Totterdown), plus linear boundaries like the Wansdkye to the south (ibid., 226–228; Brookes 2013, 48, 52; Reynolds and Langlands 2006). The end of conflicts seemingly diminished the value of the zone subsequently and the larger planned site of Marlborough (named in the Burghal Hidage) in particular gained prominence (Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 206–207, 228; Haslam 1984, 137–140).

The above is only a small selection of sites. Indeed, it is worth noting that many of the defended sites named in major sources such as the Burghal Hidage and *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* likely relate to royal initiatives and we are otherwise ignorant of the array of lesser, local sites that may have been called into action as military stations, stores, refuges by regional lords and thus commanders – notably the ealdormen (Yorke 2013, 105); only with charter references, place-names, field survey and excavation evidence can we discern other 'lesser' watchpoints and guards, which help feed into a wider image of 'civil defence' (as explored in depth by Baker and Brookes 2013). However, one must not read every site as active at the same time and forming part of a grand strategy; some elements were simply short-term regional *ad hoc* actions; some saw longer usage but no civilian role; and some place names might postdate the periods of conflict (Baker 2013, 84–85).

Burh Logistics and Manpower

But every site, small or large, new or refurbished, required human input – to plan, build, supply and maintain. Comment first can be made of the pace of construction of these many *burhs*. Even in the case of an 'emergency' *burh* where a former hillfort might be exploited, this would not have been a simple re-occupation, since these would have lacked any surviving palisade, their ditches and ramparts would be severely eroded, and interiors choked with bushes and trees; restoring full defensive capability would have required many man-days. Perhaps a first phase for each was clearance of space and the erection of a

watchtower and beacon before any consideration of a planned *burh* (see recent discussion on Old Sarum, replacing nearby Wilton, perhaps from the 990s, with a *burh* laid out south-west of the hillfort; this also became a mint: Langlands 2014; Pitts 2015 summarises the very recent geophysical campaigns). Even for old Roman sites, we should not think of intact circuit walls, since many repairs or blockings will have been needed to secure the old defences. A good many late Roman forts, such as Saxon Shore forts like Portchester and Burgh Castle (East Anglia), in fact show reuse already in the 7th century as missionary and then minster bases, perhaps reflective of royal ownership of these old defended spaces (see Hoggett 2010, 53–67); the imposition of a *burh* at Portchester, therefore, may have been into an already utilised enclosure, enabling a rapid militarisation of the site – presumably to the detriment of its religious character (Cunliffe 1976, 123 and 303, recording dumps of rubbish over former house units in *c*. AD 900, interpreted as potentially suggesting (at least in the excavated area) a change in occupants and the presence of a garrison).

Establishing a *burh ex novo*, however, was surely a project involving major workforces – soldiers, peasants, architects and engineers – and not just on site, but afield cutting wood, supplying water, provisions and animal labour and food. Yet the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* in various points imply that forts could be established at great speed. Thus for Buckingham in AD 918, we hear:

> '… In the same year before Martinmas, King Edward went to Buckingham with his army and stayed there four weeks, and before he went from there made both of the strongholds each side of the river'

For Oxford, excavation at the castle site showed how the line of the Saxon ramparts was prepared by deturfing, the ramparts then raised with re-deposited gravel, brickearth and some clay, and with turves periodically laid to stabilise the soil – materials derived from cutting broad external ditches to raise a rampart *c*. 1.5 m high and *c*. 15 m wide. A timber palisade and possible wall-walk topped the rampart, with materials for these to be imported and cut, and engineers to oversee placement (cf. Haslam 2003 for Cricklade's Period 1 defences). The size of the work crews will have been substantial. Calculations made for the raising of Oxford's castle motte – 27,000 cubic metres of material, a team of 200 men each shifting *c*. 2.0 m^3 a

day, giving a maximum of 20 weeks of work (Norton 2015) – could be multiplied many times to cover the full extent of the *burh* defences here, although one might suppose that the shire forces to be called upon might have been in the order of a thousand workmen, enabling construction to proceed at various points simultaneously. For Wallingford one estimate is of *c*. 120,000 man-hours of labour for its defences; for Cricklade, Haslam calculated over 34,000 m^3 of material for the rampart, requiring 1000 men working for four months (Abels 2013, 201–202; Radford 1970; Haslam 2006, 132). Excavation data from Lydford's defences point to possible work sections 7.0 m wide (cf. Biddle 1976, 128), but studies from elsewhere are limited to give any fuller guidance on modes of constructional organisation (see comments by Molyneaux 2015, 90–91). At Wallingford, it was observed that precious few contemporary finds were recovered in excavation of the rampart – suggesting that workers simply did their work on the site but ate, drank and slept away from the no doubt messy and hugely busy building sites (Christie and Creighton 2013, 102–103, 105; pre-*burh* finds might instead be found, reflecting the operations of churning up ground and cutting through any older settlement debris in the way of the rampart route).

Did work progress in such *burhs* on defences, roads and plots at the same time? If so, these new *burhs* sites will have been impressive theatres of operation, requiring close planning and much on-site organisation. Biddle (1976, 130) estimated 8,000 tonnes of flint were brought in for the 'metalling' of the *c*. 9 km of streets of Winchester – these requiring work gangs for extraction, animals and carts and barges for transportation, engineers to lay out the roads and oversee workers to set down the flint, food and drink to sustain workers, etc. (But Molyneaux 2015, 90, n 16 warns us not to be 'dazzled' by such large numbers, assessing down the manpower and man-hours).

As noted, water was another key consideration in the planners: creating a water flow to fill ditches (though many *burhs* perhaps had dry moats) and to supply mills (most of these are not attested until the Domesday Book of 1086, but by then they appear established often near town gates and on the defensive moats, as attested for Wallingford). Usually *burhs* lay near rivers, and, as seen, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* make clear the strategic value of waterways and of river crossings (*e.g.* for AD 924: 'King Edward went to Nottingham

with an army, and ordered a stronghold to be made opposite the other on the south side of the river, and the bridge over the Trent between the two strongholds…'). Thus, bridge-work was a further ingredient in the massive building strategy of the 9th- and 10th-century Wessex kings, a task requiring high engineering skills, quite possibly imported from the Frankish world (Coupland 1991; Lavelle 2010, 200; Abels 2013, 207, 213–214. See Watson *et al.* 2001, 52–60 on bridges for Saxon London, noting a lack of evidence prior to the timber construction of the early 11th century).

In this regard it is hard to believe quotes from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* about strongholds built within four weeks, although it is feasible that sites were laid out in that time, their core defensive lines activated, adequate to protect a garrison; but more likely this was merely the first stage, with locals and garrisons required then to continue site construction while the main army and workforces moved on to the next key site. The scale of operations necessitated the mobilisation of high numbers of the population and the call to arms to defend the threatened nation was the prime route to mobilise these and maintain these in the field and across regions, shires and beyond (Williams 2013, 154). In the aftermath of modern commemorations of the outbreak of World War I which generated much research, numerous publications (see, for example, Hamilton 2014, with powerful images of recruitment, trench-digging, supply trains, quartering in battered towns, etc.), many exhibitions and TV documentaries, we are all aware of the huge numbers of people involved in fighting abroad and equally in operations, manufacturing and supply at 'home', away from the 'front' to meet the war effort. Scale and determination stand out, alongside the actions of the leaders and their propaganda machines. We might envisage similar drives and responses in the Wessex kingdom as the Danish threat accumulated and ravaged the landscape; the calls on the shire populations by Alfred and Edward in particular must at times have been aggressive, mustering forces 'for the salvation of the nation' (Fig. 5.8). Firm and brave leadership, with kings active on the 'front' (Lavelle 2010, 106), were no doubt crucial in maintaining these drives. Demands were heavy, though, with the Chronicles referring frequently to both the national army or *fyrd* and to shire forces on extended campaigns, such as in 1006 when the king 'ordered the whole nation from Wessex and

from Mercia to be called out, and all harvest-time they lay away on a campaign against the raiding-army'. Recognising the needs to keep lands farmed was equally vital and reference for AD 893 records how Alfred divided his army into two, 'so that always half of its men were at home, half on service', plus others garrisoning sites (On army recruitment, military – duty, nobility roles, army organisation – see Lavelle 2010, chapter 3; Costen 2011, 47–50 discusses Saxon soldiery in Somerset. Molyneaux 2015, chapter 3, especially 98–104, debates obligations, calls-to-arms and organisation, proposing that local lords notably earldormen played a key role in assembling regional and shire workforces and soldiery).

Figure 5.8. 'Britons: your country needs you'. The Kitchener war poster of 1914 (Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AKitchener-Britons.jpg).

Another factor to bear in mind alongside the determination of these soldiers and workers, but one too little considered, is 'pride'. While we know none of the names of those who were drawn upon to help create the *burh* of Wallingford, many will have been neighbours from villages and hamlets, or workers from an estate, and many will

have made friends and new contacts through service and in *burh*-work. People will have been camped in the emergent *burh* or housed in nearby sites for long stretches – months rather than weeks. We can at least imagine something the scale of operations, the mess created in clearance, digging, shifting and building, the exhaustion felt, but also the pride in creating a powerful fortified site from scratch, one standing out in an otherwise fairly open landscape. Some of the nobility might even have known this was a site as big as Winchester. And for many of the workers and soldiers, this might also have become their own *burh* and shire capital; some of the nobility too might well have chosen or been asked by the king to base themselves here.

Archaeological Issues

Indeed, a key task was to make these new foci in the landscape persist: they had served as military foci and elements in a State network; investing in and encouraging take-up of settlement in these sites would help reinforce the State, giving a firmer control over money, people and materials. The provision of mints in many of these larger *burhs*, the focusing of market trade and industry in these, setting up churches and administering justice all bolstered the *burh* status and role (Hill 1988, 203–212 on growing 'multi-functionality'; Williams 2013, 135–145 on 'non-military functions'; Molyneaux 2015, 106–107). There are implications here for the landscape, in terms of town–country and village relationships, land use and food supply. As yet the archaeology is not developed enough to show if or when villages might emerge near to *burhs* to supply these; when manor owners might shift residence to these young towns; and how quickly industries developed in the *burhs* (on food supply, see Holmes 2014; on landscape changes, Thomas 2012, 45–47 noting the issues of the chronology of nucleated settlements/villages and open fields systems – seemingly an 'upping' of landscape control and exploitation between *c*. AD 800–1000; cf. Hinton 2012, 122–127 for the Wessex region and Jones and Lewis 2012, 197–201 for the Midlands). Oddly, there is rarely discussion of whether these changes responded directly to *burh* take-off or were independent of this.

Similarly it is problematic to gauge how quickly *burhs* took off as population foci: if the streets of Winchester and Oxford were being

laid out and re-metalled in the 9th–10th centuries then this supports both an expectation of town growth and a presence of active traffic within; mints by their nature require materials and markets; investment in river crossings would reflect building trade activity. But determining the exact construction date of churches, whether a house is laid out in the early, mid- or later 10th century, or if a town rampart is reinforced in the mid-10th or early 11th century can rarely be done with precision if relying on rare associated coins and potsherds in fills. Accumulated data can help: for Oxford, assessing evidence from an array of sites, the conclusion can be drawn that 'the systematic development of the principal street frontages was a feature of the late 10th and early 11th centuries' (Dodd ed. 2003, 40; on housing evidence, 35–41. The dates match works and development around the Thames crossing: 32–35); and yet the material from the recent castle area excavations may point to growth from earlier in the 10th century (Norton 2015) – a case where a larger site and assemblage and enhanced ceramic dating can be hugely informative.

Data overall remain patchy, as is the nature of urban archaeology – infrequently of sufficient size to access relevant deposits and normally suffering from time constraints as well as the destructive impact of later pitting, cellaring and site reworking. Even for less successful *burh* sites – i.e. those that did not become fully-fledged towns – the archaeology may be compromised by pre- and modern site development and limited access: in Lyng, actual trenching has been minimal and largely unproductive in terms of pre-medieval material culture (Richardson 2003, 6–7). Some successes do occur, as in the recent Winchester investigations, where housing and industry are seen to flourish already by the mid-10th century (Ford and Teague 2011, Chapter 5) – though the city's royal city/capital status might have meant quicker population growth than elsewhere. In contrast, data for Wallingford in the 10th century remain scanty, even with the recent research-driven *Burh to Borough Project* work, though this did not open up core spaces in the built-up interior; however, it did reveal sectors remaining empty of development until the full Middle Ages (Christie and Creighton 2013, Chapter 4. See Preston ed. 2012 for developer-led works in the town, noting few pre-11th-century finds). Excavation of long-term burial grounds also may offer little scope to track the earliest generations of early medieval inhabitants, and even with

extended C14 determinations it would be unwise to claim a secure sequence of urban expansion – although it may be feasible to propose comparative demographic snapshots in a townscape in *c*. AD 900, 1000 and 1100. By the latter date, however, there is often recourse to using churches as best guides to urban density, although these may denote elite investments and so do not always correlate with wider population numbers.

Conclusions

The *burh* systems of both Alfred and, more explicitly, Edward the Elder can be seen as planned, strategic networks of fortified sites, of a mix of sizes, but in total designed to secure communications lines, provide refuge, enable troop mustering, house supplies as well as to order and protect the dependent shire populations of the Wessex kingdom in the later 9th and 10th centuries. The scale of these operations – in terms of planning, logistics, manpower, engineering – appears substantial and is, even to modern eyes, remarkable, requiring the mustering and exploitation of people not just for war, but for garrisoning, and for the very act of refortifying sites and creating new bases of operations and strongholds. That the kings were successful in formulating this strategy, in engaging manpower for often extended campaigns and in creating a workable and effective defensive system – comprising far more than strongholds alone, but also beacons, dykes, road guards, watchtowers, river defences – as much reflects their determination and leadership as the abilities of the workforces, both male and female, on the ground (cf. Molyneaux 2015, 91, n 19). The availability of both the Burghal Hidage and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* enables us to create more than the skeleton of this work and to read strategy, learn of individual leaders and understand something of the vicissitudes of conflicts between Saxons and Danes. But the physical remains of these defended sites – some purely military, some destined to be fortified communities, some as cities – and the related archaeology are crucial in recognising more fully the human investments involved and the physical impacts that these sites made on the landscape.

Yet while we can think of a ‘landscape of defence’ being created, it was equally a landscape of potential and one of State: many sites became much more than strongholds, and State directives sought to

stimulate – with a high level of success – the development of number of these as central places, helping to forge a stronger State and a more closely articulated nation. The ongoing task of archaeology is to characterise these early statements of intent, to chart processes of internal evolution and to understand better the people – rich and poor – that lived and worked in these. It will be a challenging archaeology, but a vital one for late Saxon England.

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6

Monumental Expression and Fortification in Denmark in the Time of King Harald Bluetooth

Anne Pedersen

Introduction

Around AD 965 the Danish King Harald Bluetooth (*c*. 959 to *c*. 987) commissioned a rune stone to honour his parents, King Gorm and Queen Thyre, and equally to commemorate his own achievements. In modern-day terms, the rune stone might be described as a monumental piece of self-promotion, and it is a fitting point of departure for this essay, the main focus of which is the exceptional building activity across Denmark in the 10th century.

Standing in its original place between two huge mounds in Jelling in central Jutland, King Harald's rune stone marks a turning point of Danish history. The inscription on the three faces states that 'King Harald commanded these monuments to be made in memory of Gorm, his father, and in memory of Thorvi, his mother – that Harald who won for himself Denmark all and Norway and made the Danes Christian'. The meaning behind these words has been the focus of intense scholarly debate since the late 16th century (cf. Jesch 2013; Roesdahl and Sindbæk 2014b, 397–401). What exactly did the king mean when he 'won for himself all of Denmark', and did this achievement leave any mark on the landscape? Over the past two centuries archaeology and various other scientific disciplines have provided new evidence that has contributed significantly to our

understanding of Denmark at the time of King Harald and made it possible to view the rune stone in a wider context (Roesdahl 2011). A number of large-scale building-works have been attributed to King Harald, among them a recently discovered palisade complex surrounding the site of the rune stone in Jelling. These and other contemporary finds are a testimony to an innovative and ambitious ruler, and they bear witness to the strategies applied by the king to reach his goals and to communicate them to his peers, followers and subjects.

Looking at the major monuments, the most significant are: the Danevirke ramparts at the southern border of the Danish kingdom (in present-day Germany); a bridge site at Ravning Enge only 10 km south of Jelling; and the unique fortresses of Trelleborg type (Fig. 6.1). The dating of these sites, achieved by means of artefact typology, C14-dating and dendrochronology, places activity firmly in the second half of the 10th century and most likely in the reign of King Harald (Roesdahl and Sindbæk 2014a with references). Contemporary towns and trading sites were likewise fortified in the 10th century, thus offering further evidence that military power and control occupied the minds of the political and social elite then.

The Trelleborg Fortresses

A small, but well-defined group of strictly circular fortresses can be viewed as almost symbolic of the politics of the time and have been closely tied to the development of the Danish kingdom. To date, four or five, possibly six, sites are known, all located within Viking-Age Denmark and all apparently only in use for a few decades in the later 10th century (Sindbæk 2014b; Roesdahl and Sindbæk 2014a, 207). The first fortress to be excavated (1934–42) was Trelleborg on western Sjælland, situated within a short distance of the Storebælt on a headland between two rivers (Fig. 6.2). Its exploration was one of the major archaeological achievements of the time, a sensation but also an enigma in that no immediate contemporary parallels were known (Nørlund 1948, 151–158). Excavations followed at Aggersborg, north of the Limfjord in Jutland, from 1945–52 (now published in Roesdahl *et al.* 2014). Although not exposed in total, Aggersborg confirmed the characteristic features and layout identified at Trelleborg. Further details, particularly the architecture of the buildings, were clarified

during excavations (1951–69) at Fyrkat near Hobro, in East Jutland (Olsen and Schmidt 1977).

Taken together, the three sites provided a completely different image of the engineering skills and the scale of construction in the Viking Age than hitherto perceived. The fortresses are defined by a precisely circular rampart built of timber, turf and earth, surrounded by a more or less complete concentric, V–shaped ditch (Sindbæk 2014b). Two axial streets connected four gateways placed at the four points of the compass, dividing the interior into four equal-sized quadrants. Each quadrant contained near identical buildings arranged around square courtyards. However, while the ramparts of Trelleborg and Fyrkat (inner diameter 136 m and 120 m respectively) enclosed 16 large buildings, Aggersborg's inner diameter of 240 m had room for an impressive 48. Apart from the daunting size of the fortress, the excavations at Aggersborg were further complicated by the many traces of an older settlement established around *c*. AD 800, which had apparently been demolished, presumably on royal command or in the wake of an enemy attack, to make room for the new fortress (Sindbæk 2014a, 133–137). The main buildings of the various fortresses, each measuring about 29–30 m in length, were built according to the same schematics with curved long-walls and a curved roof (Fig. 6.3). At Trelleborg an outer ward was protected by a low rampart which enclosed 15 similar buildings and a cemetery. A cemetery was likewise examined at Fyrkat; this revealed that not only men but also women and children had lived there, and the finds overall demonstrated a wide range of activities (Roesdahl 1977).

Figure 6.1. Sites in 10th-century Denmark mentioned in the text (Google Maps. Place-names by Lars F. Thomsen 2012 with the addition of Borgring).

Figure 6.2. Aerial view from the north east of Trelleborg in Sjælland; in the background the Great Belt (Storebælt) between Sjælland and Fyn (Photo: The National Museum of Denmark).

A fourth, less well preserved fortress was identified at Nonnebakken in Odense on Fyn in 1952 on the basis of a circular rampart depicted in a map of Odense by Braunius in 1593. While the last remains of the rampart were demolished in 1909, minor soundings and investigations have supported the identification and date (Jensen and Sørensen 1990; Roesdahl and Sindbæk 2014a, 206–

207). A small silver hoard containing a few coins, hack silver and a silver filigree brooch may have been deposited in the second half of the 10th century, perhaps by occupants of the fortress.

The four fortresses no longer stand alone. Excavations in 2014 indicate that a circular rampart, Borgring, identified at Lellinge in eastern Sjælland, may belong to the group; it too had an internal timber framework, a street running along the inner side of the rampart and gates (two located) placed on the main axes. Moreover, the site shows evidence of extensive levelling prior to construction of the rampart. As yet, no Trelleborg-type buildings have been uncovered. However, C14-datings of burnt timbers in the northern gate support a date in the 10th century (cf. Petersen 2014; Søren M. Sindbæk, pers. comm.). In addition, two fortress sites have been suggested for Skåne: Borgeby, north-west of Lund, where small-scale trial excavations have been undertaken since 1998 (Svanberg and Söderberg 1999; ibid, 2000), and Trelleborg at the southern coast of Skåne which differs, however, in significant details, and notably lacks the characteristic internal layout of the Danish fortresses; this may instead represent a precursor to the structures linked to King Harald (Jacobsson 1999; Olesen 2000).

All of the Trelleborg fortresses are situated in defensive, yet prominent positions, near important land traffic routes and within a short distance of the coast. Only Aggersborg, on the shore of the Limfjord, had direct access to the sea. The economic and strategic potential of this site, reflected also in the finds from the older rural settlement, was probably one of the reasons why it was chosen and cleared for the fortress. From the first discoveries there was little doubt that the fortresses were royal enterprises. Artefacts indicated a date in the second half of the 10th century, and the known events of the time, among them the violent death of King Harald Bluetooth (*c*. 987) and the succession of his son Sven Forkbeard (*c*. 987–1014), as well as King Sven's activity in England in the last decade of the century, gave rise to interpretations suggesting functions such as barracks, winter quarters and training camps for troops involved in the conquest of England; defensive measures against the German Empire; or multifunctional royal strongholds connected with internal control and coercion of the population (for a survey of the discussions, see Roesdahl and Sindbæk 2014b, 383–386).

Since then, dendrochronology has provided more precise dates: work on Trelleborg commenced in the winter of AD 980/81; some of the timbers for Fyrkat were felled in *c*. 979/981, possibly as early as 974/75; Aggersborg was most likely built between *c*. 970 and 980; while wood from Nonnebakken suggests a date after 967 (Roesdahl and Sindbæk 2014a, 207). Thus, the fortresses can be placed firmly in the reign of King Harald Bluetooth, a period marked by internal challenges to the king's rule as well as external tension and power struggles, the latter particularly in relation to Germany and Norway (Roesdahl and Sindbæk 2014b, 397–409).

The Ravning Enge Bridge

Interestingly, this time-frame for the Trelleborg fortresses coincides with the date of a huge wooden bridge in East Jutland, another architectural feat associated with King Harald. Ravning Enge ('meadows') form part of a river valley system located about 10km south of Jelling. The first indications of a major structure crossing the valley were noted in 1934 when oak posts came to light in draining ditches dug into the meadows (Jørgensen and Møller 1999, 71). Archaeological excavations were initiated in 1972 after a post was C^{14}-dated to the Viking Age. Excavations continued for 10 years, after which the site was covered with a protective dam. In the 1990s remains of the timber superstructure at the southern end of the bridge were identified and the northern bridge head was examined. The old road system leading northwards up from the valley bottom can still be seen in the woods above the bridge.

The excavations revealed a bridge about 760 m long and 5.0 m wide (Fig. 6.4). The basic structure consisted of 280 sections set at a distance of 2.40 m. Each section was made up of four vertical oak posts up to 6.0 m long and measuring 30 × 30 cm in cross section (a total of 1120 posts) with a slanting support at either side. The posts had been set out with the aid of surveying sticks of hazel wood, and the deviation from a straight line was nowhere more than 5 cm. The roadway would have been more than 3,800 m^2, and the carrying capacity of the bridge is estimated at 5 tons. Oak samples dated by dendrochronology suggest that the timbers for the bridge were felled in AD 979 or 980, thus at roughly the same time as the timbers for the fortresses. Like the fortresses, the bridge seemingly fell out of

use within very few decades (Jørgensen and Møller 1999, 73–75).

Unlike two natural crossing points at Kolborg about 2.5 km west of Ravning and Vingsted 2.5 km to the east, the Ravning Bridge was built at the broadest part of the river valley. The intention may have been to minimise the risk of damage by ice and floods – an essential precaution if, as suggested, the bridge was part of the military preparations for conflict with the German Empire (Jørgensen and Møller 1999, 75–78). However, the extravagant size of the structure can also be viewed as a demonstration of the king's command of resources and the skill of his craftsmen. The bridge is connected with access routes, parallel to the *Hærvejen* (the Army Road), from the south to Jelling; as a prestige project, it would certainly have impressed travellers approaching the royal complex through this very distinct landscape. It may even have had a deeper symbolic meaning, related to the praiseworthy act of building bridges commemorated on Norwegian and Swedish rune stones (Roesdahl 1990).

Figure 6.3. Reconstruction of one of the main buildings at the fortress of Fyrkat (Photo: Anne Pedersen).

Figure 6.4. The Ravning Enge bridge site viewed from the north; the valley can be crossed along the earth dam protecting the remains of the bridge. In the foreground part of a modern reconstruction of a bridge section (Photo: Anne Pedersen).

The Danevirke

The largest known monument of the Viking Age, closely linked to the definition of territory and state formation, is the Danevirke at the southern border of historical Denmark, now in Schleswig (Germany). Here, wetlands between the rivers Eider and Treene to the west and extensive forests reaching from the Trave to the Schlei in the east combined to form an often impassable barrier towards the Continent. North and southbound traffic over land was confined to a passage only a few kilometres wide, a passage through which access was further hindered by the Danevirke ramparts, running to a total length of about 30 km.

Both written and archaeological sources attest to the existence of a border defined by natural features and physically manifest in the Danevirke even before the Viking Age. The *Royal Frankish Annals* record the decision of the Danish King Godfred in 808 to fortify the border of his kingdom against Saxony and Charlemagne with a rampart stretching from east to west north of the river Eider (Rau 1966, 86–91). Although King Godfred was long credited with this major achievement, dendrochronological dates gathered in the 1970s

showed that timbers from the main rampart were felled in AD 737, thus well before the reign of King Godfred (Andersen 1998); indeed, some were even older, indicating preparations before 737 – a conclusion supported in the early 1990s by C14-dating (Erlenkeuser 1998, 194). Archaeological remains from the landscapes of Angeln and Schwansen reveal a gradual change in the settlement density north and south of the Danevirke and the East Rampart across Schwansen already in the Iron Age (Harck 1998, 131–134). Thus, the even distribution evident in Bronze and Pre-Roman Iron-Age finds contrasts greatly with the Late Roman Iron-Age where there is little evidence of settlement south of the border line creating an impression of a settlement void between the Danevirke and the River Eider, a situation paralleled in the Viking Age.

Today, it is acknowledged that work on the line commenced in the late 7th century or even earlier as suggested by the most recent excavations in the Main Wall, during which the first gate ever identified in the entire Danevirke was located, the 6.0 m wide Kalegat gate which allowed passage through the rampart for N–S travellers on the *Hærvejen* (the Army Road). The gate was set in the 8th-century wall and continued in use until around 1200 (Tummuscheit 2012, 10).

After an apparent break in building activity from *c*. 800–950, the Danevirke was strengthened and altered in the mid-10th century. Sections in the Main Wall were repaired and possibly extended and the old North Wall was replaced by a new eastern flank (the so-called *Forbindelsesvold*), an almost 3.5 km long rampart which connected the semi-circular rampart of Hedeby with the Main Wall of Danevirke, thus integrating the town in the fortification system (Andersen 1998, 14; Erlenkeuser 1998, 194). Two dendrochronological dates of AD 965 and 968 place the building works in the reign of King Harald.

In addition, a second moat and rampart, the 6.5km long Kovirke, was constructed south of the Main Wall (Fig. 6.5). Often viewed as part of the Danevirke and as an advanced front, the fortification is in fact an independent structure, intended to establish an alternative line of defence across the shortest possible distance (Andersen 1998, 153f). Unlike the Danevirke, the Kovirke runs completely straight. It appears less impressive in execution than the complex system of the main Danevirke ramparts: the 7.0 m wide rampart had an estimated height of 2.0 m, while the V–shaped moat was 4.0 m wide and 3.0 m deep.

The rampart was fronted by a wooden palisade consisting of a row of vertical posts supported by a row of slanting posts on the inner (in the rampart body) and outer side respectively, giving the front a height of at least *c*. 3.5 m. C14-datings confirm a construction date in the later 10th century, most likely around 980 (Andersen 1998, 167), and there are close similarities in design and construction to the circular fortresses of Trelleborg type. With only one construction phase identified and no signs of repair, the Kovirke, like the fortresses and Ravning Bridge, probably only functioned for a very short period of time (Andersen 1998, 17).

Town and Country

The semi-circular rampart complex at Danevirke was first identified in 1897 as the location of the Viking-Age trading site of Hedeby, one of the four towns in Denmark mentioned in written sources from the 10th century (Skovgaard-Petersen 1981). Extensive excavations since then, supplemented in recent years by modern prospection methods, have yielded a wealth of data on roots, form and role. From its early beginning as a small settlement on the south-western shore of Haddeby Noor around AD 750, Hedeby evolved into a densely populated trading site characterised by far-reaching contacts and specialised craft production. Ibrahim ibn Yaqub al-Tartushi, travelling to Hedeby from Cordoba in Spain in the late 10th century, offers one of the most colourful descriptions of daily life here. However, he was not overly impressed: 'Slesvig (Hedeby) is a very large town at the extreme end of the world ocean.... The inhabitants worship Sirius, except for a minority of Christians who have a church of their own there.... The town is poor in goods and riches. People eat mainly fish which exist in abundance' (cf. Birkeland 1954, 103).

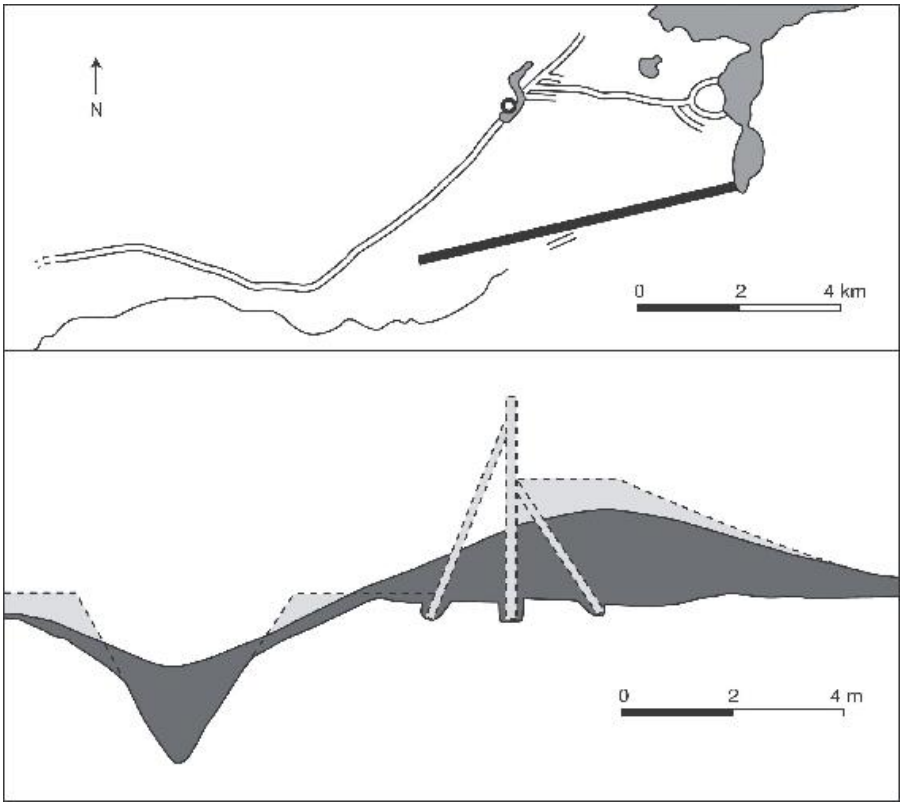

Figure 6.5. Schematic reconstruction of the Kovirke to the south of the main Danevirke ramparts and the semi-circular fortifications of Hedeby (Image after Roesdahl et al. 2014, graphics: Lars F. Thomsen 2012).

Trade agreements and the presence of royal officials and armed warriors would have given some security to both inhabitants and visitors, while the so-called *Hochburg*, a fortified elevation about 200m north east of the settlement area, served as a temporary place of refuge (Kalmring 2014). Yet, throughout much of its early history, Hedeby lay unprotected by any defences, situated as it was south east of the Danevirke Main Wall. The prominent semi-circular rampart, 1.3 km long with two main gates to the north and south, in fact appears to have been built around the mid-10th century and was presumably in place when the Connecting Wall was built in the 960s (Andersen 1998, 133). A second rampart and evidence of two moats have been located outside the semi-circular rampart, south of the Connecting Wall. One of the two moats, 2.8 m deep, had a V–shaped bottom similar to that of the Kovirke; it cut a burial containing a coin minted after 950 (Andersen 1998, 146). Towards the end of the

century Kovirke itself would have provided additional protection.

The slightly older emporium of Ribe was situated inland from the west coast of Jutland, on the north and east banks of the Ribe River. Like Hedeby, it began as an open settlement with workshops close to the river, with a few buildings and burials behind them. The earliest dendrochronological date is from a well, built of oak felled in AD 707 at the earliest, but hardly after 710. The settlement expanded and was organised in rectangular plots, these set either side of a road or passage and at right angles to the river (Feveile 2008, with references). From *c*. AD 770–780 permanent houses for all-year-round use were established on the market site, and at the beginning of the 9th century a ditch, *c*. 2.0 m wide and 1.0 m deep, was cut, enclosing an area of *c*. 12 hectares. Rather than a fortification proper, the ditch was arguably of a symbolic nature, marking the town limits. After the mid-9th century, and probably at the start of the 10th century at the latest, this ditch was replaced by a 6.0–7.0 m wide and 1.0 m deep flat-bottomed moat with traces of a bank on the inside. The ditch and bank are somewhat earlier than the semi-circular rampart at Hedeby and the dimensions also considerably smaller. While the archaeological evidence suggests that Ribe may have diminished or lost some of its significance in the 10th century, the town stands out then as a target of interest on the part of the Church; among the delegates at a church synod in Ingelheim in 948 is a bishop for Ribe, and the town had a church (cf. Skovgaard-Petersen 1981, 41–44; Feveile 2008, 128).

The third town named in 10th-century sources is Aarhus (or *Aros*) further to the north in east Jutland. Established around AD 770 and with a western suburb and church emerging in the 10th century, the town was fortified around 934, possibly after conflict with the German Empire and, at some point after 957, presumably in the 980s, the oldest rampart, 2.0–3.0 m high and 10 m broad, was extended in height to about 6.0 m and in width to 18 m (Skov 2010, 891). While a moat was added to the north and west, the Aarhus River defined the southern boundary. A decisive factor behind these defensive measures was no doubt the town's exposed location in an open bay which made it easily accessible from the sea but also vulnerable (Skov 2010, 885). The time-frame suggests that King Harald may have been responsible for the reinforcement of the defences, possibly to protect his own

interests and perhaps also those of the Church.

The dense layouts of Hedeby, Ribe and Aarhus differ from those of contemporary rural settlements. However, the latter also show evidence of a need to define and, in some instances, perhaps to defend land and property. Excavations at Vorbasse in central Jutland in the 1970s provided the first comprehensive image of Viking-Age farms and villages. While numerous other settlements have been located and excavated since then, Vorbasse remains one of the largest and most extensively examined sites, making it possible to follow the site's development over more than a millennium (Hvass 2006). In the early 10th century Vorbasse consisted of six farms, each featuring a main building, several smaller houses and sunken-featured buildings used as smithies, workshops, stores, etc.; the farms were enclosed by fences, each with a gate giving access to a road through the village. In the second half of the 10th century, the structure of the settlement changed: the sizes of the farms increased considerably and the multifunctional main buildings were replaced by a 'hall' similar to those known from the ring fortresses, and by separate byres for the animals. Fences around each farm were retained, with three roughly identical farms now covering an area of 25,000 m^2. The well-defined layout (elements of which have been recorded elsewhere in Jutland) suggest a standardised system of measurement in keeping with that identified at the fortresses and at Jelling, the system possibly linked to a common system of taxation established by the king.

Similar settlement patterns – farms with a central hall surrounded by stores, workshops, etc. and occasionally with a separate enclosure surrounding a small building with assumed cult functions – occur in eastern Denmark, as for instance at Tissø in Sjælland (Jørgensen 2003). Judging by the number of finds, Tissø was doubtless an important manor, perhaps even a royal estate, with extensive market and craft areas. The site shows a high degree of continuity, the manor with its central hall persisting in the same place from the 8th to 11th centuries. The artefact assemblage includes objects with symbolic or religious meaning (*e.g.* pagan amulets and weapon offerings); silver coins and weights; jewellery; tools and workshop waste. Sword fittings and iron arrowheads suggest the presence of armed men as part of the household or retinue of the owner.

The great hall is a prominent feature of other sites in Sjælland,

among them the almost mythical site of Lejre, the claimed main seat of the Danish kings until the 9th or 10th centuries. Excavations since the 1980s have revealed the remains of several halls, each covering about 480–500 m^2 (Christensen 2007a; 2007b). Like Tissø, Lejre is marked by a strong continuity over time and a likewise strong religious and symbolic significance, most recently attested by the find of a silver figurine interpreted as the god Odin or a sorceress with magic powers seated on a throne (Christensen 2009).

A Royal Complex

The distinct layout of these farmsteads and the development of building types in the 10th century provide the background for a site no less impressive than the circular fortresses, namely the palisade complex at Jelling. The archaeological history of Jelling began in 1820/21, when a large burial chamber was discovered by local farmers in the great mound north of the church (for an overview of the excavations, see Krogh 1993). In the early campaigns attention was centred on the standing monuments, including a huge stone setting identified beneath the South Mound, while next to nothing was known of the surrounding landscape in the Viking Age. Thus, there was no known evidence of the royal manor mentioned by the Danish historian Sven Aggesen around AD 1185 in his description of the burial of the parents of King Harald (see Aggesøn, ed. 1917).

Figure 6.6. Overview of the Jelling complex and excavations (as per 2011) with the location of the three almost identical buildings shown in the north-east quadrant and the Smededammen pond in the south-east quadrant (Graphics: Casper Skaaning Andersen).

Excavations immediately south of Jelling by the local Vejle Museum in the 1980s revealed numerous traces of settlement activity covering the 1st/2nd century AD to the 9th and first half of the 10th century (Hvass 1998; Christiansen 1999); however, only in 2006/07 did the first indications of a complex not only contemporary with the standing monuments but also far larger than anything hitherto imagined come to light north of the North Mound. Large stones were interpreted as the northern point of a vast stone-set ship, while traces of a building and a wooden palisade indicated that the known monuments were once part of a huge enclosure (Andersen and Christensen 2008). Subsequent excavations have confirmed this initial interpretation and provided a date for the complex (cf. Jessen *et al.* 2011; Holst *et al.* 2013).

The distinct line of the palisade has been identified along all four sides, each side measuring 360m in length giving a total of 1.4km. Conditions of preservation were especially good along the southern

line, where an excavation in 2010 revealed traces of wooden planks about 30 × 15 cm in cross section, and vertical posts, 20–25 cm in diameter, on both the outside and inner side of the palisade. The planks had been dug up to 1.25 m into the ground, the depth indicating a height above ground of at least 3.0 m. Oak timbers preserved at the bottom of Smededammen, a small pond cutting the southern line of the palisade, have been dated by dendrochronology to the years AD 958–985, the felling year of one sample most likely AD 968 (Jessen *et al.* 2014). The palisade is thus contemporary with or slightly later than the burial chamber in the North Mound, timbers of which have been dated to 958/59 (Krogh 1993, 214–218). The North Mound is situated exactly at the crossing point of the two diagonals between the corners of the enclosure, confirming the close relation between the two monuments in both space and time. Remains of three virtually identical buildings, each building about 24 m long, with an annexe at one gable and a porch at the entrances in either long wall, have been identified in the north-east quadrant. The north-west corner of the complex was less well preserved, and it remains an open question whether similar buildings were spaced along the entire length of the palisade.

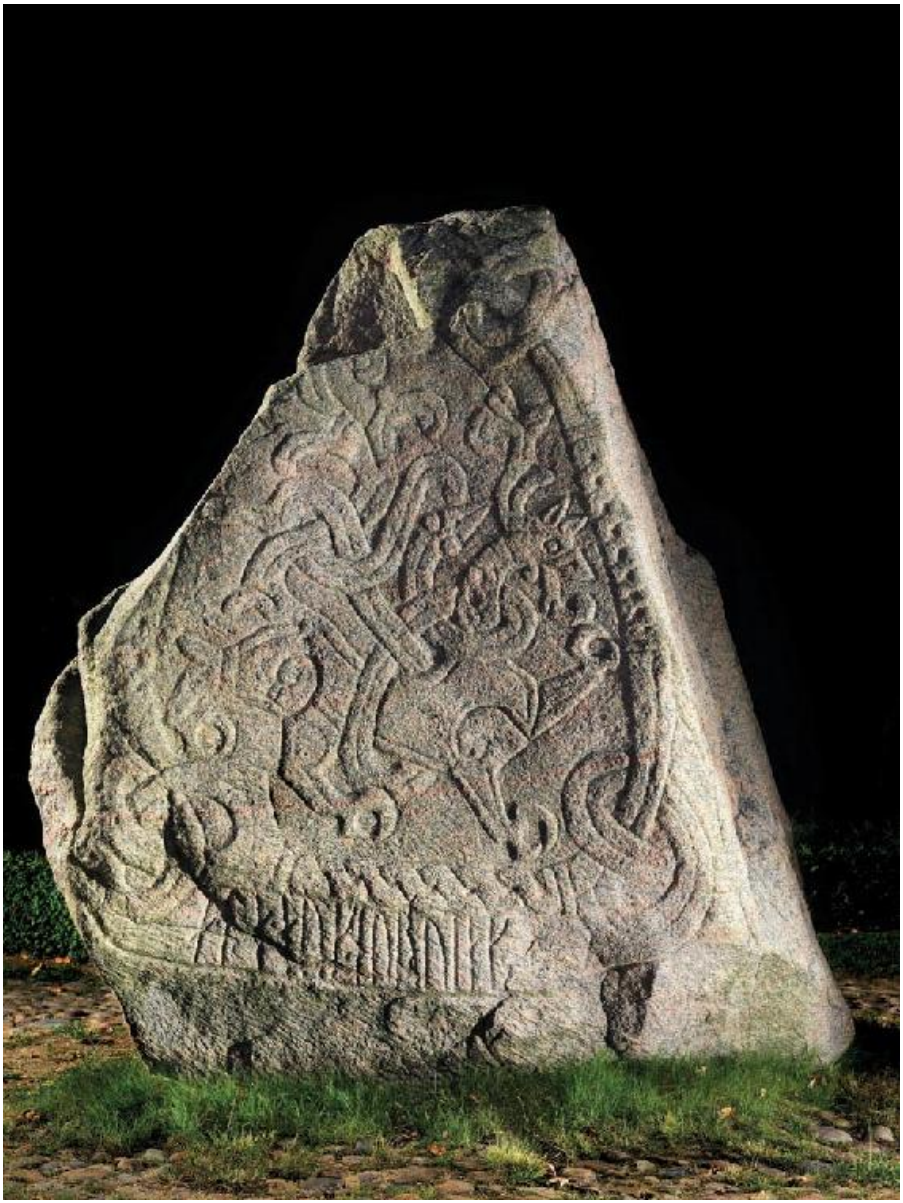

Figure 6.7. The great animal on King Harald's rune stone in Jelling (Photo: Roberto Fortuna, The National Museum of Denmark).

Thus the excavations have given both scale and defined space to the Jelling monuments, showing a four-sided complex covering about 12.5 hectares – far more than any known Viking-Age 'manor' (Fig. 6.6). In contrast, however, there is next to no evidence of crafts and trading activities or indeed daily life, suggesting that the purpose of the complex differed from that of a high status rural settlement or

trading site. Like the circular fortresses and the Ravning Bridge, the Jelling palisade was short-lived. There are no signs of repairs, and traces of a building of Trelleborg type cutting across the northern line of the palisade give a *terminus ante quem* of *c*. AD 1000. A high percentage of charcoal in the postholes of buildings and palisade indicates that the complex was burnt down, probably within only a few decades after its construction. But what was the Jelling complex used for and what justified such an enormous investment here and at the other major sites of the time?

Monumental Expression

The monuments ascribed to King Harald Bluetooth and the defensive measures built in the 10th century to protect the major trade centres all suggest a strong military focus on part of the king and presumably the social and economic elite. The most significant building works – fortresses, bridge and royal complex – demonstrate considerable technological skill and deliberate use of landscape as well as an extensive command of resources, both material and human. An event recorded by the Danish chronicler Saxo Grammaticus in *c*. AD 1200 could represent a distant memory of the huge effort put into these long abandoned monuments and King Harald's rune stone (Saxo, X.8). According to Saxo, King Harald assembled his fleet and commanded men and beasts to join forces to haul a huge stone from a beach in Jutland up to the place where his mother lay buried so that it might be set up as memorial to her. All the while dissatisfied leaders of the fleet and Harald's son Sven were plotting to murder him. When hearing of the loss of his kingdom to his son and the protests that the huge task caused amongst the men, Harald repented and abandoned the attempt, asking the men to take up arms on his behalf instead. However, indignant at the insult that had been shown them by putting them to such a demeaning task, the men refused to do so.

The massive building programme undoubtedly involved heavy demands on manpower and resources, not least of timber, which would hardly have been available in sufficient amounts in the immediate vicinity of each site (cf. Jessen *et al.* 2014). The investment may have been justified from a military point of view – the constant threat from the German Empire, unstable relations with Norway and King Harald's ambitions at home – and the mobilisation of the

necessary logistics was probably only made possible by the political climate of the time (see Roesdahl and Sindbæk 2014b).

Yet the king's decision to build was very likely not determined by military demands alone. One key factor is the role of communication – not just the practical issues of travel and transportation or access to the sites but the visual statements imparted by the individual monuments. Spaced evenly across the country, only a few days' travel apart (as strengthened with the recent identification of Borgring in eastern Sjælland), the circular fortresses were distinct, recognisable points of reference, and effective visual confirmations of King Harald's claim that he had won all of Denmark for himself. The scale and strict geometrical layout of the fortresses or the bridge at Ravning were impressive, and to the south, Danevirke with the dead straight line of Kovirke was a formidable barrier towards the Continent. With only one major gateway, important traffic north and south would have been channelled to one point, something travellers were not likely to forget.

Jelling's palisade complex also demonstrates military features: the virtually identical buildings similar to those at the fortresses, and the closely set, massive oak palisade which, with the rows of vertical posts along the inside and outside, could have supported a superstructure (cf. Jessen *et al.* 2014, 48). Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the complex was truly military in nature or rather intended as a prominent setting for special/one-off events involving representatives from all parts of the kingdom and perhaps foreign delegates/ embassies – i.e. an assembly site with specific functions tied to a specific point in time (cf. Roesdahl 2011). The location was well chosen for such a purpose: Jelling lies roughly midway between Ribe and Aarhus and was accessible (but at a safe distance) from the southern border via the Army Road and from the eastern parts of the kingdom via land routes over Fyn and sea routes ending at the narrow strait of Lillebælt between Jutland and Fyn. In such a context, the complex is an example of both monumental and representational architecture in the sense of being built to impress and to provide a controlled space for political, social and possibly religious acts or ceremonies (cf. Meier 2002). Unlike the acts themselves, the physical setting had a more permanent nature and even after the palisade and buildings were abandoned the huge mounds and rune stones would

continue to serve as a demonstration and confirmation of the statements of, for instance, royal superiority.

From this viewpoint, the Jelling complex might be compared with, for instance, a royal Carolingian or Ottonian *Pfalz* – prestigious building works which enforced the status and authority of the ruler even in his absence (Wemhoff 2014). Contemporaries of Charlemagne viewing the *Pfalzkapelle* of Aachen used the terms *opere mirabili constructa* ('built with amazing ingenuity'), *mirae magnitudinis* ('of remarkable size'), and *plurimae pulchritudinis* ('with exceptional beauty') (Meier 2002, 313). And physical form aside, the complex of King Harald in Jelling and the fortresses and the Ravning Bridge should be described in similar terms, emphasising the skills required to build them, their extraordinary scale compared with other contemporary sites, and – in the case of King Harald's rune stone – the exceptional beauty of the monument (Fig. 6.7). By their sheer size, impressive architecture and unusual features they would have overwhelmed the senses, possibly even evoking a *stupor Danorum* amongst the king's subjects and followers not unlike that which the Danes themselves might have experienced when travelling to the courts of their neighbours or, as in the case of Danish delegates to Quedlinburg in Germany in 973, when participating at the Easter assembly of emperor Otto I (see Thietmar of Merseburg, Book 2, Ch. 31).

In Jelling, known monument and building types such as stone settings, large burial mounds and enclosed farmsteads with large halls are combined and built to a vastly exaggerated scale. Similarly, the circular fortresses combine well-tested building materials (oak timber, turf and earth) with a new building type adapted from rural architecture but installed (in repeated fashion) according to rigid schematics, possibly with the buildings at Jelling as a prototype. On a prosaic level, identical houses are more efficient when numbers and speed are required, and fixed standards were probably essential to the completion of King Harald's great building programme. Thus, traditional monumental expression was here adapted to create something new and yet not so alien that it was unrecognisable and the message therefore lost. References to tradition and the past may have served yet another purpose in Jelling, namely that of establishing a link to other legendary monuments in Scandinavia thereby

strengthening the authority and legitimacy of the king and his rule. In such a context the South Mound (one without a burial) becomes important: it may have been added both to maintain an image of two burials (King Harald's parents) and to create a plurality of monuments like that known from, for instance, Gamla Uppsala in Sweden, Borre in Norway, or Lejre in Denmark, and thus also a visual impression of 'time-depth' implying ancestral legitimacy.

The Norwegian ship burials at Oseberg and Gokstad in Vestfold reveal another potential royal strategy at play in the 10th century – the reuse of monumental burials to make a new powerful statement. At Oseberg two women were buried in AD 834 in a ship covered by a mound. The grave was robbed in antiquity, and according to recent dendrochronological dating of wooden tools that had been left behind this event took place between AD 953 and 970 (Bill and Daly 2012). The evidence from Gokstad, although less conclusive, suggests that this male burial was plundered at roughly the same time. In Denmark, the ship burial at Ladby in Fyn was plundered shortly after interment had taken place in the early 10th century, and the North Mound in Jelling was likewise broken into. Rather than being random examples of treasure-hunting, the plundering of these high-profile burials may have been staged rituals, intended to legitimise the power of the person responsible. The re-opening of these graves may thus have been one of the means applied by King Harald to win for himself all of Denmark and Norway – or, alternatively, an incursion on part of the king's opponents requiring a counter-action (Bill and Daly 2012).

Conclusions

Of all the impressive building works of the 10th century only the Danevirke continued to play a strategic role in the centuries following the Viking Age. The fortified towns changed and grew in size far beyond their early boundaries and, in the case of Hedeby, the trading site and town were abandoned in favour of the more accessible Schleswig. King Harald's monumental palisade complex at Jelling was short-lived, and although the site retained significance as a royal memorial, there is no evidence that Jelling ever became a densely populated centre or the focus of ecclesiastical, political or economic activity. Likewise, the impressive fortresses and the great bridge at Ravning Enge were not maintained after the king's death and memory

of their construction and function gradually faded. It fell to much later generations to re-discover the sites and so uncover details of the dramatic transformations that took place in the 10th century. Today, it is possible to approach King Harald and his reign with far greater confidence and, in a sense, elaborate the inscription of his runic memorial in Jelling (cf. Roesdahl 2011).

The fortifications and monuments of the 10th century drew upon traditional monument types, and probably also took inspiration from major works in neighbouring countries. Yet they were simultaneously innovative and unique solutions which reveal the technological skills and the resources at the disposal of the king, alongside a considerable strategic use of landscape for both military purposes and for visual impact on visitors and aggressors. Thus the North Mound in Jelling lies at the exact centre of the huge palisade complex, at the crossing point of the two diagonals between the corners of the enclosure; the diagonal cross mirrors the right-angled cross represented by the axial streets joining the four gates in the circular fortresses but is turned about 45º, meaning that people approaching by the main routes from the north, the west (the main route through Jutland), the south and east/south east would find their vision and path blocked (and overawed) by the 360 m long sides of the complex.

The vast scale of King Harald's monuments, their setting in the landscape and their strict geometric layouts, no doubt would have had an effect also at a deeper psychological level, making tremendous impressions on the king's subjects and even on those travelling to Denmark from the cities and centres of foreign powers. At a time when, presumably, few people could read, architecture was one of the means available to the king and elite to express their social and political dominance. The royal monuments were part of a language of power; they embodied what the ambitious king wished people to see. After King Harald's death the monuments were apparently abandoned. But rather than reading this as a sign of his failure, this may well be a mark of his success in establishing a new form of kingship and a platform for his successors who turned their attention elsewhere and who no longer had need of this form of monumental expression.

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Part II

Central Europe

7

North-Western Slavic Strongholds of the 8th–10th Centuries AD

Felix Biermann

Introduction

In the area of the north-western Slavic settlement between the Rivers Elbe and Oder – nowadays north-eastern Germany (Ostholstein, Mecklenburg, Cispomerania, Altmark [Old March], Hanoverian Wendland and large parts of Brandenburg) – numerous strongholds were built between the 8th and 10th century AD, depending on the military and political conditions of that epoch. Until the 1990s it was generally supposed that such strongholds were established by tribes or groups which had already brought the tradition of fortification from their south-eastern or eastern areas of origin (*e.g.* Herrmann 1985, 7–10, 21–32, fig. 8). The differences in type, size and construction of the ringforts were often explained according to an ethnic interpretative approach – in other words, based around the divergent traditions of the tribes. In the last two decades, however, it has become more common to explain the beginnings and rise of strongholds in the context of political-military developments in the area of north-western Slavic settlement. At the same time the increase in availability of dendrochronological data (*e.g.* Herrmann and Heußner 1991; Heußner and Westphal 1998) allows for increasingly reliable judgements on the chronology of these strongholds.

The Slavs immigrated to the area between Elbe and Oder – a territory seemingly largely uninhabited since the 6th century AD in

the wake of the Migration Period (Biermann *et al.* 1999) – from the second half of the 7th century on. Based on the evidence of the small-scale settlements and cemeteries we may interpret that the migrating groups were compact and probably organised by kinship bonds. Large tribes or *gentes*, as we learn from written sources, emerged later, in the course of the 8th century. The Slavic colonists were bearers of the so-called Sukow Group, a rural culture of modest social and economic complexity, characterised by undecorated ceramics and open settlements with block-houses (Biermann *et al.*1999; Dulinicz 2006). In this period, however, they did not build any strongholds: in the area under study here there were no examples of the East European hillforts of the Szeligi-Zimno type (see Dulinicz 2000) nor is there written evidence for mighty rulers as reported by Fredegar's *Chronicle* (I, 48, 68, 72) already in the first half of the 7th century for western Slavic areas in the south. Before strongholds were built between the Elbe and Oder rivers, starting approximately in the middle of the 8th century AD, there existed what is termed a Sukow phase without strongholds. Together with the lack of richly furnished burials and with only rare finds of weapons or élitist equipment, the evidence points to social and economic affairs of low complexity, since strongholds were normally built by rulers (Rossignol and Wehner 2010, 41).

Types, sizes and construction methods of the ringforts that did emerge changed across the 8th–10th centuries: over time, we will observe that large early Slavic fortifications were replaced by small, middle Slavic ringforts. There were also specific regional trends: in particular, the fortification history of the broad coastal hinterland (Ostholstein, Mecklenburg, Cispomerania and northern Brandenburg) must be distinguished from that of the interior between the later Old March and eastern Brandenburg (Fig. 7.1).

Early Large Strongholds of the 8th and 9th Centuries

Economic and socio-political development differed in the various parts of the north-western Slavic territory. The inland regions remained on the economic and social level of the Sukow phase until the 9th century; their economy continued to be fairly weak, and fortifications were not erected until the middle part of this century (Biermann 2000, 85–88, 103; 2006). A key reason for this stagnancy was the peripheral

position of these lands to the Baltic coast and to the long distance trade routes. In contrast, in the hinterland of the Baltic Sea we see a different situation, with an economic impetus generated from the second quarter of the 8th century, caused by that territory's integration into the Baltic Sea trade zone, mainly overseen by Scandinavians. This led to the foundation of sea trading places *(emporia)*, dating, according to archaeological finds and tree-ring data, to soon after *c*. AD 700.

Figure 7.1. Map of the north-western Slavic territory with the present-day regional names and the strongholds mentioned in the text. 1. Alt Lübeck; 2. Bosau-Bischofswarder; 3. Drense; 4. Feldberg; 5. Friedrichsruhe; 6. Glienke; 7. Lenzen-Neuehaus; 8. Lenzersilge; 9. Leuthen-Wintdorf; 10. Liepen; 11. Mecklenburg; 12. Neu Nieköhr/Walkendorf; 13. Oldenburg; 14. Potzlow; 15. Sternberger Burg; 16. Stücken; 17. Sukow; 18. Tornow; 19. Vorwerk; 20. Wildberg (Map: Felix Biermann).

These prominent craft centres and market foci, known from Groß Strömkendorf (Jöns 1998), Rostock-Dierkow (Warnke 1992), Ralswiek (Herrmann 2005) and Menzlin (Schoknecht 1977; Jöns 2006; in general: Kleingärtner 2014) which emerge from the mid-8th to the 9th century, had strong impact on their hinterlands, as increasing numbers of metal-detected finds from the wide surroundings of the *emporia*

continue to reveal. In particular, various of the north-western Slavic strongholds have produced many Arabic silver coins (Jöns 2006, 100; Biermann 2011, 165; Biermann and Henning 2012). As places of specified crafts manufacture and markets for goods of all kinds, and as mediators between local, regional and long distance trade, they became the catalysts to a powerful economic development in the whole coastal hinterland (Brather 1996a; Biermann 2006). In the course of this, the slave trade also expanded (Henning 1992; Lübke 2004, 102–105), likely centred on these maritime trading places. The Slavic groups themselves probably took part in obtaining slaves and in trade with their victims. This surely caused insecurity in society: no doubt the threat of being captured and enslaved stimulated the establishment and stabilisation of military-social organisations of the Slavic people on the Baltic.

Rapid economic development is indicated via many archaeological finds, such as in the increased range of commodities, high-status fittings and crafts production. In particular the high quality, richly decorated ceramics of the Feldberg type, gaining currency from the mid-8th century (Brather 1996a; 1996b), confirm this economic upswing and participation. In direct interaction with the positive economic changes there developed the first large tribal sovereignties, which are mentioned in written sources from the late 8th century; the first known north-western Slavic ruler is the Wilthian prince Dragowit, mentioned in Frankish imperial annals for AD 789 (Ernst 1976, 95–99; Lübke 2004, 51–52). The first Slavic strongholds are connected to these new sovereignties.

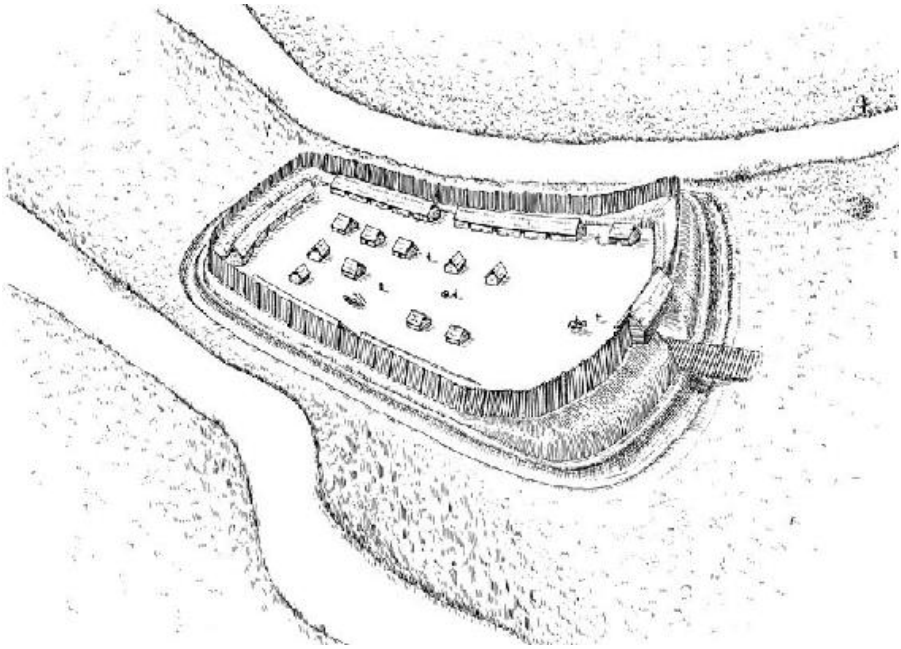

Figure 7.2. A Feldberg stronghold, schematic reconstruction oriented to the stronghold of Sternberger Burg in Mecklenburg (Drawing: Ottilie Blum).

Figure 7.3. Aerial view of the Feldberg stronghold of Vorwerk near Demmin, Cispomerania (Photo: Fred Ruchhöft).

These fortified bases came into existence only in the wide hinterland of the Baltic between Ostholstein, northern and western

Brandenburg (Prignitz, Uckermark, northern Havelland), Mecklenburg and in Cispomerania, but not in the other areas off the sea. The strongholds are, like the ceramics, named of 'Feldberg type' (Herrmann 1967, 206–258; 1968, 41–51, 164–169; Brather 2006; Biermann 2010; 2011). They are characterised by their substantial size – often 200–350 m in diameter – and their skillful reference to the natural topography (Figs 7.2 and 7.3). They are positioned in wetlands as well as on hills and are often divided into a main fortress or castle and one or more outer enclosures or 'baileys'. The ramparts are powerful wood-and-earth constructions: timber caissons or 'chests' filled with earth, stabilised internally with beams, set side-by-side and one after another. Quite often the rampart faces were covered with field stones to counteract attacks with battering rams or catapults, but proper stone-built walls do not occur. In front of the ramparts there run moats – in the wetlands these tend to be shallow and water-filled, and at the hillforts they are dry and often several metres deep. Usually the ramparts were refurbished several times during their lifetimes, by building new sections to the old fronts. As a result they often developed impressive magnitudes of scale – with widths up to 20 m and heights of 5–10 m. The gates were mostly simple gaps, without evident tower installations. Gradually the size of these fortresses decreased in the course of time; in the 9th century, new strongholds of the Feldberg type tended to be only *c*. 90–120 m in diameter. This may indicate changes in the power of the rulers initiating the erection of the strongholds.

The strongholds were intensively settled by large groups of people, as indicated by numerous settlement features and deposits. Beside remains of houses, hearths, pits and cultural layers, the presence of long ditches of 20–45 m length is striking: these seem to relate to a specific type of extended sunken building in log- or wattle-and-daub construction, used as residences, as testified by both finds and hearths. Feasibly, they can be interpreted as barrack-like rows of houses – a distinctive building variant for this stronghold type which perhaps served as accommodation of military groups, such as retinues (Figs 7.4 and 7.5). Beyond the housing, we nearly always find large open yard areas, for livestock and stores, but also to hold people and animals from the environs in times of danger. The fact that the Feldberg strongholds were often the focus of conflicts is indicated by traces of

fire at many ramparts. Arrowheads and other *militaria* are common finds too, and within the stronghold of Potzlow (Uckermark) numerous human bones were excavated, which form evidence of a massacre at the fall of the stronghold at some point in the 10th century (Biermann and Henning 2012).

The current state of research concerning these strongholds is relatively poor, but significant excavated examples include the sites of Liepen, Sukow, Neu Nieköhr/Walkendorf and Sternberger Burg (Schuldt 1962; 1964; 1967; 1983), Friedrichsruhe (Jöns and Messal 2007), Glienke (Messal 2005; 2007; 2015) and Feldberg (Herrmann 1969a) in Mecklenburg, Oldenburg in Holstein (Müller-Wille 1991), Vorwerk (Herrmann 1969b) in Cispomerania, Drense (Schmidt 1989) and Potzlow in the Uckermark (Biermann and Henning 2012), Lenzen-Neuehaus and Lenzersilge in the Prignitz (Biermann *et al.* 2009). Tree-ring data associated with phases of construction do not pre-date the 9th century: these include Lenzersilge (*c.* AD 820–860; Biermann *et al.* 2009, 39), Bosau-Bischofswarder (mainly first half of the 9th century; Gebers 1986, 64–71, 95–98; Herrmann and Heußner 1991, 270–271), Glienke (third phase, AD 870s; Messal 2007; 2015, 34), Oldenburg in Holstein (first half of the 9th century, 860s; Gabriel and Kempke 1991, 146) and Alt Lübeck (AD 817–819; Kempke 1988; Herrmann and Heußner 1991, 268; Dulinicz 2006, 247). However, there are some more ambiguous data belonging to the 8th century: for example, the bridge leading to the stronghold island of Sukow, presumably constructed at the same time as the fortification (Schuldt 1964; Dulinicz 2006, 246; Ruchhöft 2008, 41), was present already in the mid-8th century (dendrochronological data between AD 693+/-10 and around/after 747; Herrmann and Heußner 1991, 265–267; Henning 2002, 139; 2004, 133); two stakes dated to AD 711 and 716 (exact data) were excavated from settlement pits in the outer bailey of Wildberg, although it is unclear whether they refer to the stronghold or to an open settlement (Grebe 1976, 184–186 fig. 12; Dulinicz 2006, 41, 353). From Friedrichsruhe we have data for the late 8th century and around AD 800 (Herrmann and Heußner 1991, 270; Jöns and Messal 2007), and there are 'around/after'-data and wood without stratigraphic context from some other Feldberg strongholds (see Herrmann and Heußner 1991; Henning 2002, 139; Dulinicz 2006, 247). Overall, it can be stated that these Feldberg strongholds were

built and used predominantly from the late 8th and 9th century, continuing for much of the 9th century. However, only a few survived beyond AD 900.

Figure 7.4. Excavation of a long ditch used for residential purposes in the stronghold of Potzlow, Uckermark (Photo: Felix Biermann).

The builders of these strongholds were the Slavic tribal sovereignties which had developed and strengthened in those decades of growth of the Baltic trading zone. The economic impetus was

evidently the foundation for ambitious political activities in many zones; soon, emerging war-like rivalries between different competing Slavic groups gave their leaders scope to cultivate their military aura and display their power and authority. Thus, the social structures grew in extent and complexity. Accordingly, the fortified settlements were important as instruments and symbols of rule because this was not based on a traditional hierarchy; therefore control of a stronghold was not only of practical importance for the ruler, but also for his charisma and status (Rossignol and Wehner 2010, 24–31). Chieftains used the ringforts as seats of administration, and as power symbols and instruments in their conflicts with neighbouring groups and chiefs. Many spurs – attributes of a horse-riding élite – are found in these strongholds, underlining their interpretation as seats of élites (Biermann 2011, 161, n. 33). This aspect is supported by the documentary sources: the strongholds appear in those regions where early tribal organisations are mentioned, such as for the Wilts and Abodrites. The noted Wiltian prince Dragowit had a *civitas*, certainly a stronghold, according to the Frankish annals of the year 789. Arguably, the structure of the strongholds discussed above give more concrete data on the emergence and complexity of these new Slavic chiefdoms from the late 8th century (cf. Fritze 1960; Lübke 2004, 51–56, 64–72; Ruchhöft 2008, 66, 77).

Ringforts of the 9th–10th Centuries

In the late 9th and first half of the 10th century, the hinterland of the south-western Baltic Sea coast underwent a temporary economic crisis; the maritime trading places were quitted, became less important or else changed their character (see Callmer 2007, 242–244; Biermann 2006). The material culture decreased, the Feldberg type pottery was complemented and then replaced by the Menkendorf type wares and by other, low-quality ceramics. At the same time the large chiefdoms appear to have lost their influence or broke down completely, signifying a more fractured social landscape. The construction, the maintenance and defence of the Feldberg strongholds had necessitated large groups of people, but the rulers were no longer able to mobilise them. As a result most strongholds were given up. From this process, once again we observe a strong interaction between economic and political development.

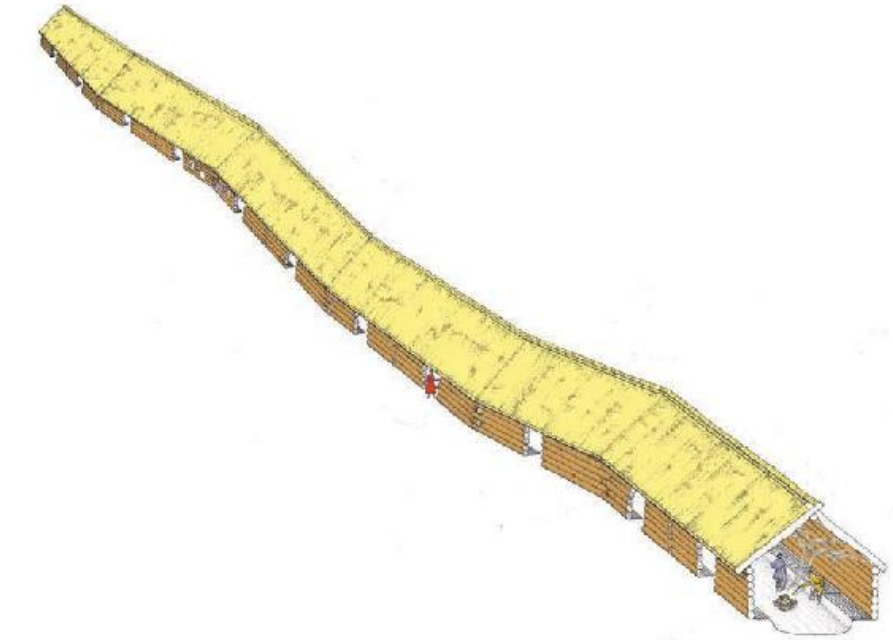

Figure 7.5. Schematic reconstruction of the Potzlow long house (Drawing: Ottilie Blum).

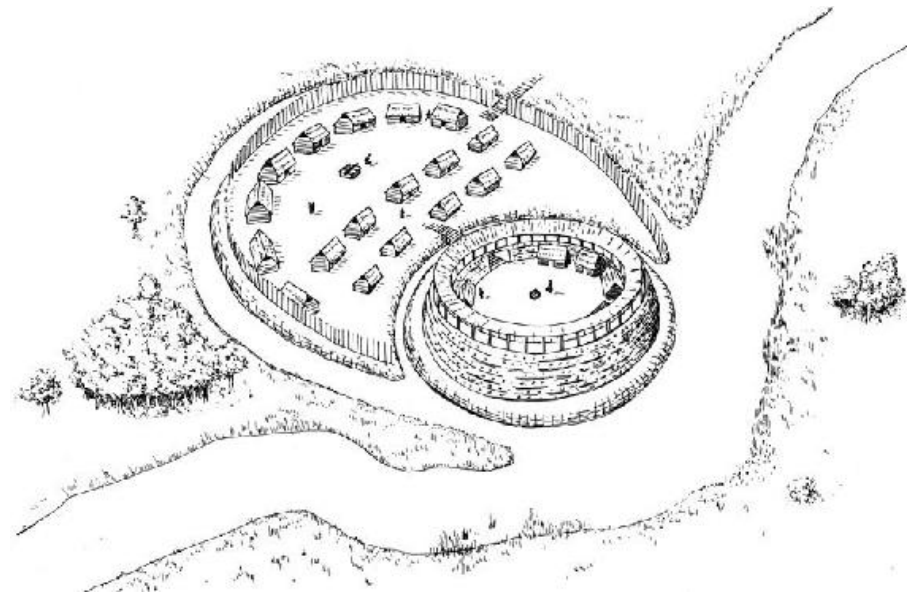

Figure 7.6. A middle Slavic ringfort, schematic reconstruction (Drawing: Ottilie Blum).

Figure 7.7. The middle Slavic ringfort of Stücken in the Zauche region, Middle Brandenburg, aerial view (Photo: Günter Wetzel).

The political changes are reflected in particular through a new type of stronghold, which makes its mark on the landscape from approximately the middle third of the 9th century: small, round ringforts of *c*. 60–90 m diameter positioned in the lowland and exploiting the natural protection of marshes or waters (Figs 7.6 and 7.7). On the one hand, these developed in areas which had already featured the older traditions of the Feldberg strongholds, and sometimes were in fact erected at the same places. Alternatively, such

reduced fortified sites were established in the coastal-distant regions which had not been affected by the older fortification traditions. Overall, hundreds of these strongholds were erected across the whole northern West-Slavic territory. In some regions, particularly in the Lower Lusatia and neighboring areas, they are labelled as the Tornow type (*e.g.* Herrmann 1966; Dulinicz 1994). Their mighty ramparts in wood-and-earth construction (see Fig. 7.8) enclosed cramped, densely settled spaces. Beside post- and log-buildings, usually there were one or more wells for supplying drinking-water and for fire-fighting (Biermann 2001b). Access to the strongholds was by gates set like tunnels through the ramparts (Kinkeldey 2013). As with their predecessors, ramparts were constructed with a wood-and-earth box framework. Sometimes sites had fortified outer baileys, but there were always open settlements in the vicinity of the strongholds, to create the typical 'stronghold-settlement-complex' (Herrmann 1967; Henning 2002; Biermann 2000, 112–139; 2001a, 39–45, 335–340).

Some sites contain evidence for cultic activity, whether built temples or in the form of sacrifices (Schuldt 1985, 35–49, fig. 50; Ullrich 2003, 156–183, figs 47, 62, 63). High status equipment such as spurs, jewellery and weapons found in the strongholds show their connection with the ruling elite; this elite no doubt also oversaw the site cults (Biermann 2000, 77, 81, figs 37, 38). Finds overall suggest that these were constantly inhabited places, containing military buildings, elite residences and ordinary, worker homes. Military functions are highlighted by the fact that almost all ringforts saw damage or destruction by fire, most evident at the ramparts. Human bones (signifying massacres in some cases) in several ringforts similarly reveal the impact of martial conflict on these strongholds (see, for example, Frey 2001, 201–202; Biermann 2010, 29).

We have numerous tree-ring data available which allow for close dating of these smaller type ringforts to between *c*. AD 850 and 950/70 (Henning 1991; 1998, 13–26; Herrmann and Heußner 1991; Heußner and Westphal 1998). They are known from almost all of the northern West-Slavic areas, but are distributed differently. In some regions, for instance in Lower Lusatia (Henning 1998, 9–10, fig. 1), they were built tightly side-by-side, whereas in other regions they are more scattered. This correlates with the structures of rule in the various areas. The function of the ringforts is still much debated; the

range of interpretations runs from fortified refuges to defended elite manors and to purely military bases (Henning 1991; Kempke 1999; 2000; Biermann 2010, 29–31). Nevertheless, it is most likely that these ringforts were the seats of small chiefdoms which had developed in the 9th century, based on older clan and small tribe hierarchies or, in some cases, chiefdoms which arose from those ruptured earlier large sovereignties. These small power groups started to erect small strongholds in the second half of the 9th century, as both residences and military bases. The main reason for this was no doubt competition for power over people, lands and resources which characterised the Middle Slavic period, and perhaps also because of a likely population growth in the 9th century. The rulers needed the strongholds because their power was only weakly based on kinships and institutions; more important in this regard was personal charisma and practical, mainly military, success (Rossignol and Wehner 2010, 29; Saile 2010). Another factor that has been proposed, is that the erection of strongholds was stimulated by foreign attacks, for instance by the Hungarians and the East Frankish Empire; however, this external stimulus seems to have been of secondary importance, compared to internal factors in terms of landscape changes (see Biermann 2010).

It can be argued that the various chiefs or lords based their power on war-like allegiances and the control of strongholds, which were manifestations of these rivalries and competition; this was now an insecure landscape and ringforts formed an essential condition for the achievement and holding (and even expansion) of power. Undoubtedly, control of a stronghold could lead to an increase in the complexity of rule, due to the practical and symbolic value of a fortification. Moreover, the construction of a stronghold by one chieftain led necessarily to the erection of counterparts by his neighbours. The construction and design of the strongholds were always similar because the builders were oriented towards each other, given the lack of other models; they must also have drawn inspiration from the older, remnant fortifications in the landscape. What is of course less well understood are the logistics (people and materials) involved in the engineering and planning – can we think of these as military building operations? Were the builders and architects of an allied neighbour used to help build another's stronghold? Nor do we know the speed of construction, although the programme of works

certainly implies the availability of large workforces – drawn from the immediate community (note that strongholds are usually connected with open settlements) and from villages and other sites in the vicinity – to dig the ditches, to raise the earth ramparts, and to cut the wood for the timber box-framing within the ramparts.

Figure 7.8. Remains of the wooden construction of the rampart of Leuthen-Wintdorf near Cottbus, Lower Lusatia. The front beam of the chest is carbonised, while the beams of the inner stabilisation have decomposed (Photo: Felix Biermann).

The small ringforts are, in this respect, evidence not only of war-like and insecure times but also of small-scale and compartmentalised ruling structures in the north-west Slavic territory between the second half of the 9th and the 10th century. In those regions where small ringforts are very numerous, large strongholds as central tribal ruling centres cannot be recognised, either archaeologically or in the historical sources (see Biermann 2000, 99; 2001a, 336–338; Gebuhr 2007, 163–165). However, in the areas of the old great sovereignties in the north of the north-western Slavic area fewer smaller-sized strongholds were built, and the important central fortifications in Mecklenburg, Pomerania and northern Brandenburg were partly still in use during the 10th century, with Mecklenburg the Obodrites' main stronghold (Donat 1984, 97–101) and Oldenburg that of the Wagrians (Gabriel and Kempke 2011). The large sovereignties were apparently weakened but had not perished. This is underlined by written sources from that period, such as Widukind of Corvey (I.36; III.50, 53–55, 68), who mention Slavic rulers in the north, including Abodrite *reguli* and *subreguli*, and a *rex barbarorum* in the context of the battle of Lenzen in AD 929. Accordingly, the old central places of these tribal rules had at least partially maintained their symbolic and military significance.

In the decades after AD 900, for the whole north-western Slavic territory, we observe ruling hierarchies of different range and complexity, which is reflected in the stronghold structures. The small chiefdoms in the south, with tribes like the Lusizi, or the groups in the eastern Hevellian area of influence, were a development of older, simple structures of power. There were no central powers; the tribal areas were politically split into the districts of small rulers fighting each other. In the north larger and more complex ruling structures are still registered, though these were reduced and weakened in the period of crisis around 900. From the second half of the 9th century, as a result of rivalries between the chiefdoms, there emerged a central family-based power with the Hevellians in the Havelland, whose centre became the Brandenburg on the River Havel. But their rise was impeded and finally stopped by the Eastern Frankish and German expansion from the 920s until the 12th century (cf. Brüske 1955, 21; Ludat 1971, 14; Herrmann 1985, 265).

Ever since the 8th century, the north-western Slavic area had been in contact with its neighbours – the Scandinavians in the north,

Saxons and Franks in the west, other Slavic areas in the south and the east. Until the 10th century attempts to conquer this area had been neither intense nor successful. But in the 10th century the situation changed: in several campaigns from AD 928/29 on, the East Frankish King Henry I conquered large parts of the area between Elbe and Oder; the territory was then divided into marches and margraves were installed (Brüske 1955, 16–19; Herrmann 1985, 335–337; Lübke 2004, 143–147). However, the depth of rule fluctuated in the marches, both spatially and chronologically. In the south, the existing Slavic ruling structures were purged bit by bit, being replaced by a new administrative system based on larger strongholds (mentioned partially as 'Burgward') replacing the small ringforts in the second half of the 10th century. A stable Eastern Frankish-German ruling system was set up (Fritze 1958, 18; Herrmann 1985, 346; Billig 2012, 160–164). However, the Slavs in the north – the Abodrites, Wilts and other tribes – were subdued only under a tribute rule. Their power systems continued under the condition that they accepted Eastern Frankish dominion (Beumann 1994, 45; Lübke 2004, 146–147). In that period two ruling systems existed parallel – the marches of the empire and the Slavic organisation. Hence, the northern Slavs were able to oppose the Eastern Frankish supremacy, and after AD 929 rebellions erupted nearly every year, eventually culminating in the famous Lutizian revolt of AD 983, as a result of which the Slavic tribes in the Baltic hinterland shook off the Eastern Frankish rule, until the 12th century (Thietmar of Merseburg III.17; Brüske 1955, 39–45; Fritze 1984; Herrmann 1985, 345–349; Beumann 1994, 123). Thus, the 10th century does not show changes in the stronghold structures in the northern areas which are as clear as in the southern Slavic territory. In both areas, again, larger strongholds increasingly came to be built from the second half of the 10th century, but these are not the subject of this paper.

Conclusions

The development of the north-western Slavic strongholds in the 8th–10th centuries was very much connected to political progress and its interactions with the economic conditions. In general, the hinterland of the Baltic Sea developed more vigorously than the interior because of its geographically favorable position to the Baltic commercial zone.

From simple beginnings in the 7th century, complex economic structures emerged in the 8th century. In participating in this economic boom (which most likely was closely connected with the slave trade) there occurred a political consolidation which appears evident especially in the creation of the large strongholds of the Feldberg type from the mid-8th century. The geographically peripheral interior lagged behind this development. Not before the second half of the 9th century were the first fortifications, already smaller, lowland ringforts. Also in the north we see such strongholds erected during this period, whereas most Feldberg strongholds were quitted. The lower size but substantial number of round ringforts should indicate that they were built by lesser rulers than those in charge of the Feldberg sites. In the north this was the result of a crisis whose economic side becomes visible with the decline of the maritime trading places and the Feldberg ceramics. However, in the south the building of the ringforts indicates a positive development. Up until then the political system had remained at the Early Slavic level.

The 10th century was characterised by the expansion of the Ottonian kings to the north-western Slavic area, initiated in 928/29 and leading to the creation of marches; their ruling organisation replaced the Slavic power structures in the south, while in the north it formed only a supremacy and tribute rule. There the western dominance broke down in the Lutizian rebellion of 983, while the south remained largely quiet. These developments are also reflected in the strongholds: in the south, Eastern Frankish fortresses were built from the second half of the 10th century, whereas in the north no drastic break in the stronghold development is noticeable. However, both regions show a trend towards the enlargement of fortifications during that time.

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8

Early Medieval Strongholds in Polish Lands

Przemysław Urbańczyk

Introduction

In the lands which make up contemporary Poland, i.e. those lands set between the Baltic Sea in the north and the mountainous belt in the south, the period in question sees important processes in the establishment of a territorial State by the Piast dynasty. Unfortunately, written sources are scarce for both the pre-State period and for the reigns of the first recorded rulers: Mieszko I (before 963–992) and his son Bolesław Chrobry (992–1025). Therefore, when studying the last three centuries of the 1st millennium AD there must be a heavy reliance on the archaeological evidence, prominent among which are strongholds or fortified settlements. The chronology and presumed functions of these complexes help enhance the vision of the processes which take us from the 'egalitarian' early Slavic societies to the centralised State that greatly changed the geopolitical situation in Central East Europe.

Only one historical source survives, which offers some insight into the pre-state situation. The so-called *Bavarian Geographer*, written in the Frankish city of Fulda in *c*. AD 845, contains a rather mysterious list of collective, perhaps 'tribal' names (ethnonyms) with a number of *civitates* ascribed to each of them. Thus: *Prissani, ciuitates LXX. Uelunzani, ciuitates LXX. …Vuislane. Sleenzane, ciuitates XV. Lunsici ciuitates XXX. Dadosesani ciuitates XX, Milzane, ciuitates XXX.*

Besunzane, ciuitates II. Verizane, ciuitates X. Fraganeo, ciuitates XL. Lupiglaa, ciuitates XXX. Opolini, ciuitates XX. Golensizi, ciuitates V. For over 200 years, this laconic text has been considered basic to any understanding of the pre-State situation (*e.g.* Zakrzewski 1917; Kucharski 1925; Łowmiański 1958; Nalepa 2003), while the numbers of the listed *civitates* (traditionally understood as strongholds rather than towns) have been simplistically exploited to estimate the power of each of the named 'tribes' (*e.g.* Arnold 1927; Łowmiański 1958; Nalepa 1964).

Such a crude interpretation should be questioned because of the striking lack of correlation between the given numbers of *civitates* and the numbers of known early medieval strongholds in the presumed territories. Furthermore, as will be shown below, the dendrochronological data gathered so far for the oldest known strongholds have rendered no dates prior to the mid-9th century AD. This indicates that either the author(s) of the Fulda document had no reliable information to hand and freely estimated the quantity of *civitates* by simply multiplying the number 5 or else we are wrongly interpreting the meaning of this term which, in the Early Middle Ages, might have indicated not just strongholds, but also towns, dioceses, principalities or even states.

However, I would argue that none of these explanations fits the historical context of the pre-State period in the Polish lands. This undermines the traditional interpretation of the list of the *Bavarian Geographer* but leaves us with no written accounts about strongholds or central places in later 1st-millennium Poland. What we have at hand therefore is only archaeological evidence and broad knowledge on historical developments in North-Central Europe.

Theory

It is perhaps rather obvious that all stable societies have some central people and central places, which form the nodes of the infrastructure of social order. With the growth of hierarchical differentiation internal tensions also grow as well as the need to develop various tools (ideological, organisational and material) to help sustain the socio-political status quo by securing these centralities. One of the solutions available is to have any core or crucial central places (*e.g.* elite's bases, oracles/temples, 'garrison points', markets, ports) fortified.

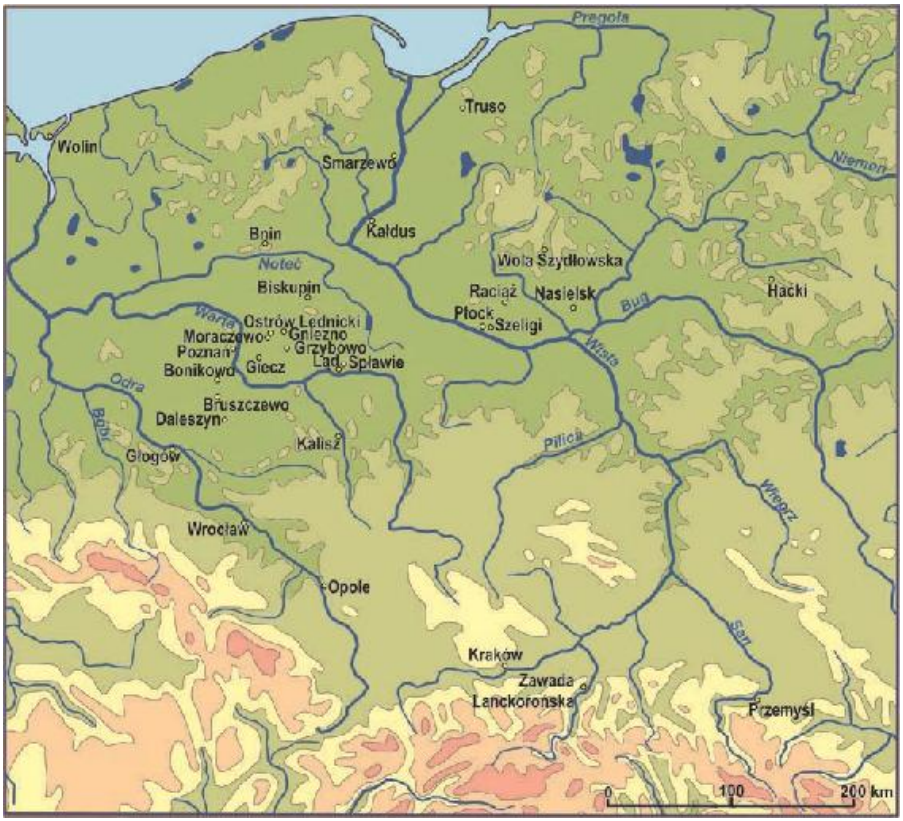

Figure 8.1. Sites mentioned in the text (Map drawn by K. Skrzyńska).

This aspect of the hierarchisation process is fairly easily observable by its material manifestations. In North-Central Europe archaeologists typically reveal the growth of centralisation through discoveries of fortified sites which convincingly indicate the presence of specific elites able to mobilise/coerce masses of their followers to build (more or less) impressive defensive structures. These strongholds are thus material indicators of the drive of ambitious leaders to augment the efficiency of their social power through control, display and monumentality.

The area in question was left beyond the organisational structure established within the borders of the Roman Empire where towns and forts were abundant. Nor was it influenced by the Carolingian and later Ottonian tradition to establish royal ecclesiastical (churches and monasteries) and civic (palaces) foundations which generally possessed defensive structures. No knowledge of masonry is known from the Polish lands before the mid-10th century. This leaves us with

the evidence of various earthworks as indicators of central places which needed to be controlled and from which territorial control was overseen (Fig. 8.1).

Only on the Baltic Sea coast do centres comparable to the Western European ones emerge in the 9th century. These 'ports-of-call for ships travelling across the Baltic' (Indruszewski 2004, 244) were connected by an extensive system of sailing trade routes with other Baltic *emporia* (Haithabu, Schleswig, Birka, Lund, Ribe and Skiringssal) and with the *vics* of the North Sea region. They were recorded by the early medieval chroniclers who mention Wolin and Truso located on the Polish coast. Despite their transregional economic position, none of those early coastal centres was involved in building of the Piast State.

Figure 8.2. A street and the gate in the reconstructed Hallstatt-period 'stronghold' of Biskupin (Photo: P. Urbańczyk).

The often impressive remnants of early medieval and medieval earthen ramparts and ditches are still typical elements of Polish landscape; such visible eminence of these sites makes for rather easy identification of those fortified nodes of social networks. They may have very different forms, which perhaps depended on regional tradition and local availability of construction materials and various sizes, which depended on the level of technological knowledge and the leaders' ability to mobilise/coerce sizeable labour forces.

They are broadly recognised and commonly understood as valuable witnesses of when the area was covered with strongholds. In Poland every site with a visible earthwork is traditionally called *gród* which is generally translated as 'stronghold'. This uncritically uniform terminology needs discussion because Polish understanding of the modern term *gród* as 'a place artificially enclosed for defensive purposes' (Hensel 1948, 16) is an unsubstantiated extension of the original etymology which indicates an enclosed site with *no* military implications. Similar terms in various languages – Germanic (*e.g.* Anglo-Saxon *geard*), Slavic (*e.g.* Old-Church-Slavonic *gradъ*) and Baltic (*e.g.* Lithuanian *gar̃das*) all derive from the Pre-Indo-European base **g'herdh*, which denoted a place surrounded with some construction, i.e. an enclosure – not necessarily defensive. Because the Polish language lacks a term as general as 'stronghold' (Polish *twierdza* and *forteca* hardly fit an earthwork) there is a need to specify more precisely what should be understood by a medieval *gród*/stronghold. Such a structure resulted from the conscious and complex use by some centralised power over physical, economic, organisational and political instruments, which established and sustained the multifunctional character of early medieval strongholds.

Physically, such a structure was manifested by various constructions (rampart, moat, palisade) which encircled a defined area. *Economically*, the establishment and running of a stronghold involved a massive investment not only in material terms but also in human resources. *Organisationally*, the specific order of an enclosed habitation space must have been internally executed. And *politically*, the functioning of such a site had to be supervised by some authority.

Figure 8.3. Model of the 'hillfort' in Szeligi (Photo: P. Urbańczyk).

Thus, by uncritical application of the term *gród* 'to all encircled places we blur the functional and constructional differences between various encircled sites, sometimes very significant ones… Differences between them are not limited to dating results, diverse construction and layout or different location but, as it seems, they include also differences in roles fulfilled by those places in contemporary societies' (Dulinicz 2004, 305f; see also Urbańczyk 2014, 27–28). And these roles changed with the changes of historical context during various periods. Archaeologists, trying to estimate relative power of strongholds, typically refer to the quantitative aspects (notably the size of the ramparts, the size of encircled surface, potential numbers of inhabitants); however, the size factor was not necessarily directly correlated with the status (and ownership) of a stronghold because its position in the regional political geography could have been realised in variously interrelated spheres of ideology, politics, economy or military force.

Chronology

In Poland the last 25 years have brought important changes in our understanding of the chronology of the earliest strongholds, in the explanation of their emergence and in our knowledge of their likely functions during their various periods of use.

Today, it is not longer possible to maintain that the Western Slavs fortified their central places from the earliest period of their observable presence in the Polish lands because no wood-and-earth rampart has provided dendrochronological dates from *before* the mid-9th century (Dulinicz 1999, 101–103). The dendrochronological revolution in dating has firstly 'rejuvenated' by over two hundred years the Polabian/East-German strongholds of the Tornow type (*e.g.* Henning and Heußner 1992; Dulinicz 1994; Henning 1998); subsequently, the dating of early fortified sites in Polish lands has changed by much more than a hundred years, because their roots had previously been set to the 8th or even the 7th century (Dulinicz 2001).

However, there are some exceptions to the generally correct threshold of the mid-9th century: firstly, one can recall the temporally and spatially isolated phenomenon of the so-called Biskupin-type strongholds erected in the 8th century BC (Fig. 8.2); these investments, attributed to the Lusatian culture people, were even compared with early towns (*e.g.* Harding and Ostoja-Zagórski 1989; Niesiołowska-Wędzka 1991; Ostoja-Zagórski 1993) but did not develop and were later forgotten; furthermore, the defensive character of these ancient structures has been questioned (Mierzwiński 2000).

A second exception are the very compact fenced settlements dated to the 6th–7th centuries AD (*e.g.* Haćki and Szeligi – Fig. 8.3), which all lie to the east from the river Wisła and have parallels in Ukraine and Byelarus. In Poland we call them 'strongholds' by force of tradition stemming from the above-mentioned misleading ambiguity of the term *gród*; however, their small size and the lack of significant defensive features raise serious doubts as to their possible military function. In fact, the purpose behind these sites remains mysterious. Archaeological investigations have yielded no evidence of permanent habitation by large numbers of people, nor were they centres of specialised craftworking, nor significant commodity exchange markets. Alternative explanations have pointed to the symbolic sphere (cf. discussion and literature in Urbańczyk 2002, 39f), since characteristic features of these sites (*e.g.* their distinctive mound-like topography, evidence of metal processing and the presence of scattered human bones) 'suggest that we should ascribe to them the function, maybe not sacral, but ritual, important to establish order and hierarchy of power in a given group' (Dulinicz 2000, 95).

Thus, these were not regular strongholds but rather central places functioning as sacral sites for periodic performing of rituals. Their main function would thus have been to spatially focus social relations and thus aid in maintaining social order (cf. Dalewski 1996; Banaszkiewicz 1998). After all, every communicative community needs to identify with some symbolic centre that acts in sustaining the social order and serves as a reference point for establishing the power structure. The appearance of these 'pseudo-strongholds' may indicate that contemporary Slavic *homo symbolicus* so expressed his need to materially mark the centre of his highly mythologised world.

As noted above, the real threshold in the history of strongholds in Polish lands comes *after c*. AD 850 based on the available dendrochronological dates. Traditional scholarship, more or less overtly, had leaned towards an evolutionistic vision whereby these strongholds were presented as an aspect of a slow, natural development of organisational infrastructure; their emergence and later changes were viewed as material manifestations of the gradual centralisation of social power with the economic sphere as the main determinant of hierarchisation of Slavic societies. Today, however, these early medieval fortified centres are interpeted as products of strategies of investing in the socio-political infrastructure, i.e. manifestations of the centralisation of power and formation of stable territorial organisations. Their appearance probably resulted from the activity of local elites who manifested their status and visualised their claims for dominance over specific lands by raising distinctive landscape signals – the strongholds. But despite their defensive potential highlighted by their encircling ramparts, these sites do not seem to have had military function only. I argue that they instead materially and monumentally manifested the ability of supra-local elites to mobilise their followers to participate in execution of a common project that symbolised common solidarity. Building a stronghold in this period should thus be looked upon as a response to the challenge of an emulation of marking political status through possession of a stronghold.

Therefore, research must involve not only the economic, administrative and political spheres but also the symbolic and religious dimensions. Such analyses show diversity in the fortified settlements, which differed one from another not only with respect to

size and shape but also in their functions enforced by the elites. The changing role of strongholds likely reflected the changing organisation of central places which can be linked with the formation of new structures of political power connected to the development of increasingly complex territorial organisations where strongholds were built and intentionally transformed to better serve current, mainly political, needs.

The phenomenon of erecting strongholds in the Western Slavic areas may be reasonably viewed as the delayed consequence of the fall of the Avar power, which collapsed in the early 9th century following attacks by Charlemagne's Franks and Khrum's Bulgars. Decline of that nomadic 'empire' removed from the geopolitical stage the military power which had controlled all Central Europe and finally allowed free development of the Slavic societies that had been long kept under strict surveillance of their mighty neighbour. It also speeded up natural processes of gradual hierarchisation among Slavic societies and the emergence of local political elites found material reflection in strongholds which indicated the establishment of relatively stable local centres of a chiefdom type.

Their leaders typically strove to expand their territorial power which resulted in tensions provoked by 'permanent' competition. This was not necessarily military confrontation but rather a challenge for better leadership expressed in sustaining support among followers. In this strategic game the prize was survival at the geopolitical stage: successful were those who were smarter, more determined and ready to apply unconventional solutions or, simply, those who had more good luck; losers (if not killed) had to face an alternative – to emigrate or meekly accept new order, while the winners could enlarge the territorial range of their domination. In striving for expansion, leaders needed support from their followers, who must have been attracted rather than coerced. In such a perspective, it may be argued that erection of an early stronghold was not a manifestation of authoritarianism but rather one of political solidarity: a stronghold would thus be not a hideout of a hated despot but instead a source of pride and self-identification for the community.

Thus, the main function of those early strongholds (examples being Bonikowo, Bruszczewo, Daleszyn, Giecz, Kalisz and Spławie in Wielkopolska; Nasielsk, Raciąż and Wola Szydłowska in Mazowsze;

and Zawada Lanckorońska in Małopolska – see Kurnatowska 2000, 259f; Dulinicz 2004, 314) should lie in the sphere of political symbolism. It formed a kind of political 'fashion' of the time which required local elites to mark out their status and authority in a territory through strongholds. These were built not in response to practical and military reasons but rather as elements of entourage of successful leaders, whereby contemporary *homo competitor* adapted to geopolitical reality by erecting strongholds within his lands.

But, no doubt, neighbouring 'stronghold elites' might frequently have engaged in confrontations over lands, rights, resources and authority, and the dynamism of such circumstances is probably reflected in the growing number of strongholds. They were numerous not because military conflicts were endemic but rather because frequent geopolitical changes led to quitting of centres that belonged to the defeated leaders. New men of power have often re-organised the space of socio-political relations to manifest change from the 'old' system. A stronghold of the defeated could be destroyed, left ruinous, or simply abandoned to visibly indicate the fall of the earlier chief, or else retained and even developed to profit from its symbolic value known to the locals.

Unfortunately, however, the current lack of extensive stratigraphic data in particular makes the clear chronological discerning of such events impossible. Limited excavations did not reveal multiphase occupation. Therefore, we can guess that the lifespans of a majority of the strongholds erected in the pre-State period were probably as short as careers of local leaders who faced external threats by greedy neighbours and internal opposition by challengers striving for supreme power. Such a political dynamism did not allow a long-term stabilisation of the geopolitical status quo expressed by building strongholds and closely connected to their maintenance.

Strongholds of the Piasts

Endemic competition, typical for multi-chiefdom contexts, will have continued until one of the challenging leaders applied more effective (*e.g.* more aggressive) politico-military measures, thereby gaining an upper hand. He could break the 'democratic' mechanisms of an assembly and execute his surveillance by force instead of appealing to the uncertain collective loyalty of his followers. One notable solution

to reinforce his power base would have been to permanently employ a retinue, which could have served both to pacify internal opposition and to subjugate neighbours. Such 'improvements' enabled the turning of the earlier conditional leadership into one of paramount and inheritable status, i.e. a dynastic rule.

Figure 8.4. View of the remains of the Giecz stronghold (Photo: P. Urbańczyk).

The ultimate political success of the Piasts, who entered the geopolitical stage with the battle lost in AD 963 to the Saxon earl Wichmann Billung the Younger (*Widukind* III, 69), may indicate that it was one of the founders of the dynasty who introduced new effective methods of competing for and achieving domination. It was the culmination of the spiral of challenges which surely characterised the earlier phase with its multiplicity of petty power centres. Archaeological discoveries allow us to set this significant transition to around the AD 920s–930s when a small territory of *c*. 5,000 km^2 was established in the plains of Wielkopolska (*Polonia Maior*, Greater Poland); it is manifested also in the erection there of a series of heavily fortified strongholds at hitherto uninhabited locations in Bnin, Gniezno, Grzybowo, Ląd, Moraczewo, Poznań, Smarzewo and Ostrów Lednicki, while one older stronghold was radically rebuilt in Giecz (whose primary, smaller rampart belonged, according to dendrochronology, to AD 869 – see extensive discussion in Kara 2009)

(Fig. 8.4).

This well-planned establishment of an *ex novo* network of powerful nodes of territorial infrastructure proves the organisational skills of the investors. Such an extensive system of uniformly fortified centres served as a solid foundation of a territorial power base for a supreme authority. One may also expect some religious functions to those centres but no pagan cult spaces or finds have been yet found in or near the early Piast strongholds. Only at Gniezno and in Kałdus can we note artificial mounds of piled-up, random stones mixed with ashes and burned animal bones, which could possibly be interpreted as relating to some sacrificial activity.

The chronology (AD 920/30–940/50) of building these strongholds in central Wielkopolska indicates actions initiated by Mieszko I's predecessors, who founded the dynastic State. Dendrochronology allows us to identify several phases (detailed in Urbańczyk 2012, 310–314) when those strongholds were built and rebuilt according to (unknown) strategic decisions:

Figure 8.5. Remnants of a stronghold on Ostrów Lednicki Island (Photo: P. Urbańczyk).

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firstly, strongholds were established in Grzybowo (after 922), Poznań (after 923), Giecz (after 925), Ląd (after 926) and Ostrów Lednicki (after 921/928);

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next, new strongholds were built in Gniezno (*c*. 940), Bnin (938–940) and Moraczewo (second quarter of the 10th century) and some of the 'older' ones were reconstructed – notably Grzybowo (939–942), Giecz (*c*. 940), Ląd (after 940) and Poznań (after 943);

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about two decades later, a tripartite defensive complex was constructed and a stone *palatium* built in the main political centre in Poznań (950s/960s), while the stronghold on the Ostrów Lednicki Island (Fig. 8.5) received in 963/964 two broad bridges which provided easy connection with both sides of the lake and marked roads leading to Poznań in the west and to Gniezno in the east;

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in the 970s–980s, the central strongholds in Giecz, Gniezno and on Ostrów Lednicki were enlarged and reinforced. New ramparts in Poznań had foundations over 20 m thick (Kóčka-Krenz 2011, 27) with a stone bench at their face (see Fig. 8.6; also Kara 2009, Fig. 82). This island stronghold also was given a permanent bridge connection across the River Warta.

From their original small polity in Wielkopolska, which quickly established extensive external contacts – as indicated by silver hoards containing Sammanid dirhams, Byzantine, German, Italian, French, Bohemian, English and Danish coins deposited between *c*. 970–985 (Kara 2009, 261, 264 and Fig. 93) – the Piasts vigorously expanded their power in all directions. This is archaeologically observable in the destruction of some local strongholds and/or the establishment of new fortified centres around the original territory (*e.g.* Dzieduszycki 1998; Brzostowicz 2006).

Dendrochronology indicates the fortifying of the distant borders of the enlarged State at the end of Mieszko I's reign: in the north, a stronghold in Kołobrzeg-Budzistowo was built on the Baltic coast after AD 986; in the south, control over the strategic islands in the River Odra was established with strongholds built on the riverine islands in Opole (during 980s), Wrocław (after 985) and Głogów (after 989); and in the west, the Płońsk stronghold flanked the Vistulian border from 978/979.

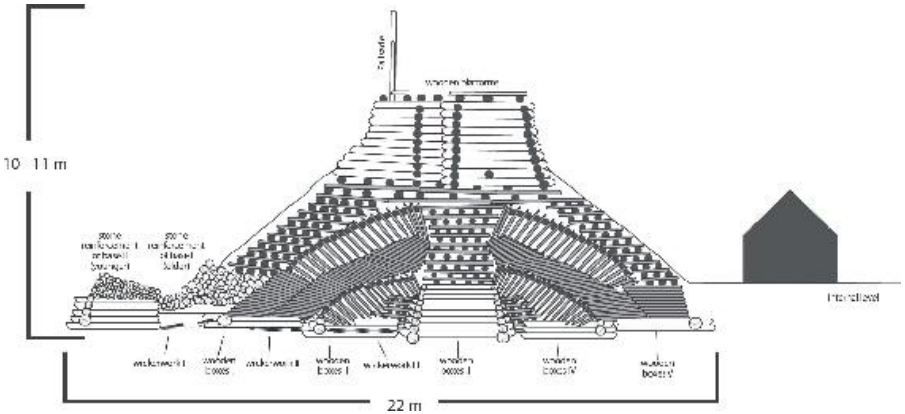

Figure 8.6. New reconstruction of the rampart at Poznań built in the 970s–980s (Image after Antonowska-Gorączniak 2013, Fig. 22, redrawn by Katie Gabriel Allen).

With such impressive investments in their military infrastructure, the early Piasts established centres which formed a coherent network of territorial control. Administratively these strongholds oversaw a new topography of social relations; as seats of local elites they generated demand for luxury goods which attracted specialised producers and traders; and as taxation nodes they held stores for collected staples (mostly foodstuffs) and thus stimulated development of local economies. In this way a new structure of political, military and socio-economic relations was enforced by the expanding territorial State which required an effective system of political loyalty control, social order execution and extraction of production surplus necessary for the sustenance of the central administration which needed sources for elite consumption – notably imported goods.

Strongholds were 'essentially politically strategic creations rather than products of economic or material-cultural evolution' (Hines 1994, 23). While the State was a territorial manifestation of the existence of centralised political and military power, those fortified centres re-organised early medieval societies by constituting new nodes of the communications and control network; as important instruments of the new super-authority, these strongholds established and secured regional footholds that were crucial to the political and administrative infrastructure. Strikingly, in most cases, there was no continuity between pre-State centres and early Piast strongholds: clearly the new fortresses were erected in strategically significant regions, not just on frontiers, but internally, in territories where it was

necessary to demonstrate power and where relations between the expanding State and local traditional power structures were still strained.

The situation changed when the state reached the stage of internal stability and external security. While the strongholds still fulfilled mainly political functions as seats of authority, sites of military control and administrative enforcement of obedience of subordinate lands and workers, with time they acquired also more economic functions of supra-local significance – namely to provide food and materials for the ruler, his family and court, retinues and garrisons, but also to generate surpluses and goods for exchange for luxury goods. The stability of the State enabled these fortified communities to develop and thereby generate more surpluses; such conditions will have attracted in external traders as indicated by the inflow of foreign coins – mostly Saxon but also Bohemian, Bavarian and English.

When Mieszko I entered the Christian orbit after his baptism in AD 966, one would expect manifestations of the typical strategy of *imitatio imperii*. This should have led to furnishing his main strongholds with elements characteristic of an imperial *Pfalz* – notably monumental stone architecture of civilian and ecclesiastical buildings. This, however, was not the case because, apparently, Mieszko I was satisfied with having just one centre of what we might term a 'European' standard – namely that in Poznań where he had his stone *palatium* with adjacent St Mary's church/chapel. He also initiated construction here of a monumental St Peter's cathedral. Strangely enough, there are no other churches (stone or wooden) which may be safely attributed to his initiative elsewhere in his realm; church building was seemingly not a feature of the early State strongholds (see discussion in Urbańczyk 2012, ch. 6).

Figure 8.7. Reconstructed rampart in Kalisz (Photo: P. Urbańczyk).

Thus, the main functions of the fortified centres of the early Piast State were: to execute political loyalty; to initiate any required military mobilisation; to supervise the fiscal system; to store staples needed by garrisons and the travelling court; to exploit the resources (human and natural) of their hinterlands; and to facilitate engagement in long-distance trade. These strongholds were seats of militarised supervisors of the political order and nodes of execution of the system of central authority. They were also stages where manifestations of the royal majesty, governing authority and judicial prerogatives of the monarch took place.

The results of archaeological investigations, which have revealed substantial investments in Poznań only, indicate that Mieszko I continued the rulership typical of a small State by having one core political centre. This changed when his son Boelsław Chrobry (992–1025) established a network of *sedes regni principales* by building *palatia* at Giecz, Ostrów Lednicki, Przemyśl and possibly Gniezno and erecting a network of stone churches in several strongholds – *e.g.* in Giecz, Gniezno, Kałdus, Kraków, Łekno, Ostrów Lednicki, Przemyśl and Wrocław. When combined with a series of coins struck in various places, this allows us to suggest that, in line with contemporary and better documented kingdoms, he introduced the system of a 'permanently' travelling ruler (a *rex ambulans*), whose court and retinue exploited these strongholds for accommodation, supply and protection. This mobility of power helped to reinforce the social order

at all levels at these strongholds, from governors and administrators to garrisons and to workers.

Paradoxically, territorial expansion, usually used as a measure of politico-military success, could have worsened the Piasts' political situation because they had to ensure loyalty of larger and, what follows, more differentiated populations, which was more costly and more difficult because the effectiveness of administrative surveillance diminished with the growing distance from the seat of the paramount political power holder. Consolidation of such a state needed the transformation of traditional social structures which came now to be dominated by the (single) autocratic duke who had the right to apply coercion and to enforce legal order and fiscal obligations within his lands (*Gallus Anonymous* I, 11–15).

Both Mieszko I and Bolesław Chrobry erected new strongholds to strengthen their control over territory that was already too spacious for a direct surveillance (Fig. 8.7). This marked the change from the early system of centres 'based on external ties, international trade, and collecting tributes from distant lands, to a system of internal exploitation based on the personal duties of peasants (Nosov 1994, 194) which increased the effectiveness of administrative and fiscal control over the expanding territory of the early medieval State. In support of the itinerant ruler moving between 'his' central places, the monarch was now, on a daily basis, represented locally by militarised administrators/governors – appointed by and responsible to the duke – who presumably resided in those strongholds.

It was probably Bolesław Chrobry (crowned in 1025) who consciously applied physical, economic and ideological means to further develop some of his larger strongholds (notably Giecz, Gniezno, Kałdus, Kraków, Ostrów Lednicki, Poznan, Przemyśl and Wrocław) as multi-functional centres that concentrated within them most of the regional activities (Urbańczyk 2008, 133). Therefore, their interior space was furnished with symbolic elements that signalled the supra-local position of the territorial power – prominent among these being churches that represented universalistic ideology and the centralised institution that now closely co-operated with the early Piast monarchy. Uncovered foundations of monumental basilicas in Giecz, Gniezno, Kałdus, Kraków and Poznań were designed according to the current West-European trends. These strongholds were

organised and controlled by the royal administration that collected tributes, fines and taxes for its own consumption and for redistribution.

These enhanced strongholds secured an effective supply of the administration system, providing enough food for specialists living there (administrators, priests, warriors, merchants, servants, etc.) that they could focus on non-agricultural tasks. The earlier economic self-sufficiency will have gradually given way to an offer of specialised services in the spheres of production (craft), exchange (trade) and transcendental interpretation (Church). As a result, larger populations were opened up to the penetration of money and the market system, as indicated by the massive inflow of foreign coins (see Bogucki 2011).

However, specialised trade and handicrafts are still considered by many scholars as prime movers for the development of these 'pre-towns' that are viewed, principally, as centres of production and exchange. This stubborn stressing of the primacy of the economic sphere in the process of 'urbanisation' reverses the logic of the historical process. Economic development was not the condition for but rather the result of organising centres of political surveillance by the supreme power. In my view, production and exchange had no decisive impact in the emergence of the early Piast strongholds and they fulfilled, first of all, the needs of the inhabitants of these agglomerations which originally were, to a large extent, self-sufficient. Craft and trade could develop because there had already existed well organised and politically supported local centres of administration and surplus storing, and not the opposite.

The process of emergence of these multi-functional centres and of a concentrating of settlements and production activities took place around the turn of the 1st millennium when the consolidation of the supra-regional State organisations took place under the rule of Bolesław Chrobry (Strzelczyk 1999). The monarchy, having secured its political supremacy, sought means to increase the effectiveness of administrative-fiscal controls. Thus, regional nodes of State infrastructure were initiated (or further developed) in strategically important localities, chiefly where the expanding new power faced resistance from the old power structures – a good example of such a strategy being Płock, which was evidently 'planted' at the turn of the

10th/11th centuries aside the earlier settlement concentrations. This was, it is argued, 'the result of the conscious policy of the early Piasts who wanted to break with the local settlement and political traditions' (Dulinicz 1999a, 109). Thus, despite the development of the economic sphere, it was surveillance and the execution of obedience that were of the primary importance for the *homo administrator* of the young Piast State.

Conclusions

The periodisation outlined above is merely a narrative which simplifies an extremely complex process. It was the need for order that made me list the elements that were most important at the particular stages of State emergence, development and consolidation. Thus, in the phase of emergence of early local Slavic communities, (1) the *symbolic-religious* sphere seems to prevail. During the pre-State period, characterised by continuous competition between neighbouring leaders, the building of fortified centres was used as the core argument in (2), the *'geopolitical'* challenge. The organisation of the centralised territorial State was supported by establishing centres of (3) *political-administrative* territorial control. The following consolidation of the dynastic States is then reflected in the organisation of (4) the *administrative-fiscal* infrastructure based on central strongholds (*sedes regni principales*). Unfortunately, it is not possible to present any universal chronology for those transformations because every region of Poland needs more intensive and also individual scales of archaeological scrutiny; only through this will we also better visualise the people and structures that occupied and functioned in these strongholds.

This vision does not mean that each of the phases can be characterised by reference to one sphere of social relations only. The aim of my proposed periodisation is to turn attention to those spheres that determined, to a large degree, decisions taken by the people who dominated the political stage. Despite the seeming continuity of the process, these phases differed substantially and the transitions from one to another took place during periods of accelerated changes triggered by the search for new organisational solutions.

Important for this vision is the stress I have put on conscious actions (decisions, plans) that determined the history of the early

medieval fortified agglomerations in the study region. Strategic decisions, taken by the territorial political power, were external to the organised centres. Such actions were not necessarily independent because there were periodic 'fashions' or 'emulation processes' that promoted the given way of planning the infrastructure of territorial control. These decisions were not necessarily authoritative because the freedom of the central political power was always somehow limited by local and regional circumstances. Nor were they always successful as may be learned from the rather short history of many of these early medieval strongholds (*e.g.* Giecz, Grzybowo and Ostrów Lednicki) which never developed into high medieval towns.

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9

The Natural Environment, Anthropogenic Influences and Supra-Regional Contacts at 9th- to 10th-Century Fortified Elite Settlements in Central Europe

Hajnalka Herold

Introduction

This article discusses fortified sites in central Europe, in the territories of today's Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia.[1] This geographical unit will be considered here as a whole, in order to be able to view this region in the 9th and 10th centuries AD without having to consider present-day national borders, which obviously did not exist in the Early Middle Ages. In chronological terms, the focus lies on the time period between the 'Avar Wars' of Charlemagne (AD 791–796) and the end of the 10th century, when the Bohemian and the Hungarian states were formed and the areas under East-Frankish control in this region came to be administered by the Babenberg family. The article starts with a brief overview of the historical background, followed by a discussion of the layout and buildings of the main fortified sites in 9th- to 10th-century central Europe. Next the paper will examine evidence for different aspects of the natural environment at these sites, including anthropogenic influences. Finally, possible roles of these fortified sites and their connections to the main political players of this period, namely the Frankish Kingdom

(East-Frankish Kingdom after AD 843) and the Byzantine Empire, are considered.

Historical Background

Written historical sources from the 9th and 10th centuries AD for the area under consideration are not available in large numbers and do not allow for a detailed reconstruction of the historical situation unlike in some other parts of the Carolingian and Byzantine world. The main spheres of political influence and some of the most important historical events are listed below for orientation.

Following the 'Avar Wars' of Charlemagne (AD 791–796), much of the area south and west of the River Danube in today's Austria and Hungary, and possibly parts of today's eastern Austria north of the Danube, entered the process of integration into the Frankish Kingdom (see Fig. 9.1 for the location of rivers and sites mentioned in the text). The political unit known as the 'Great Moravian Empire' was formed in the course of the 9th century and existed, based on historical records, until about the early 10th century in today's south-eastern Moravia, western Slovakia and possibly parts of north-eastern Austria and western Hungary. The western part of the 'Great Moravian' territory was later occupied by the Duchy of Bohemia, which itself was mainly based in the western part of today's Czech Republic. The eastern part of the former 'Great Moravian' territory came under the control of conquering Hungarian groups. The latter also occupied much of the area south and west of the Danube formerly in the process of integration into the Frankish Kingdom (East-Frankish Kingdom from AD 843).

In the first half of the 10th century, the border between the Frankish and Hungarian territories is generally believed to have been the River Enns (today on the border of Lower and Upper Austria); in the second half of the century this shifted eastwards to the River Leitha (today on the border of Burgenland and Lower Austria). However, the geographical location of the borders between areas controlled by the Duchy of Bohemia and the East-Frankish Kingdom on the one hand, and between areas controlled by the Duchy of Bohemia and the Hungarians on the other hand, is poorly understood at present. At the end of the 10th century, the formation of the Bohemian and Hungarian states took place, and the Babenberg family

came to be entrusted with the administration of the areas under East-Frankish control in this central European region (For further information on the historical background, see *e.g.* Pohl 1988; Wolfram 1995; Brunner 1994).

Figure 9.1. (a) Location map of the study area (grey) in Europe. (b) Location map of the sites and rivers mentioned in the text. Sites: 1. Břeclav-Pohansko; 2. Ducové; 3. Gars-Thunau; 4. Levý Hradec; 5. Mikulčice; 6. Nitra; 7. Pobedim; 8. Sand near Oberpfaffendorf; 9. Stará Kouřim; 10. Staré Město; 11. Uherské Hradiště-Sady; 12.

Zalaszabar-Borjúállás sziget; 13. Zalavár-Várossziget. Rivers: Danube, Enns and Leitha (Map by Hajnalka Herold).

Layout and Buildings of 9th- to 10th-Century Fortified Sites in Central Europe

Fortified settlements were important centres in the later phases of the central European Early Middle Ages (9th to 10th centuries AD). These sites have yielded the most complex excavated features and the richest material culture that is currently known from this period in central Europe. The study of these key sites therefore constitutes an essential part of early medieval archaeology in this region. It should be noted that research traditions have played a significant role in the relative emphasis placed on different aspects of early medieval archaeology in the regions concerned: research in Austria and Hungary has mainly concentrated on cemeteries, while the excavation of fortified settlements has been a major focus in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (united as Czechoslovakia until 1992). Since a detailed commentary of the layout and buildings of 9th- to 10th-century central European fortified settlements has been presented in a recent paper (Herold 2012), this article provides a brief overview on this topic, and goes on to examine aspects of the natural environment and its anthropogenic modifications, followed by considering supra-regional contacts related to these sites.

The fortified settlements of 9th- to 10th-century central Europe have different origins; some were founded in the early 9th, or possibly late 8th, century AD, with others being established in the later 9th and 10th centuries. Although settlement remains and/or graves from the 7th and early/mid-8th centuries are present at some of these sites, settlement activity became more intensive during the 9th and 10th centuries in these places. The intensification of settlement activity and the emergence of fortified sites indicate fundamental changes in the political, economic and social history of the study area around the beginning of the 9th century, as well as multiple transformations during the following two centuries.

Figure 9.2. Aerial photograph of the fortified settlement of Gars-Thunau from the south-west. In the front the fortification ramparts of the western part of the site, on the right the place of the manor farm and in the background the River Kamp and today's village Thunau (Image © Aerial Photography Archive of the Department of Prehistoric and Medieval Archaeology, University of Vienna).

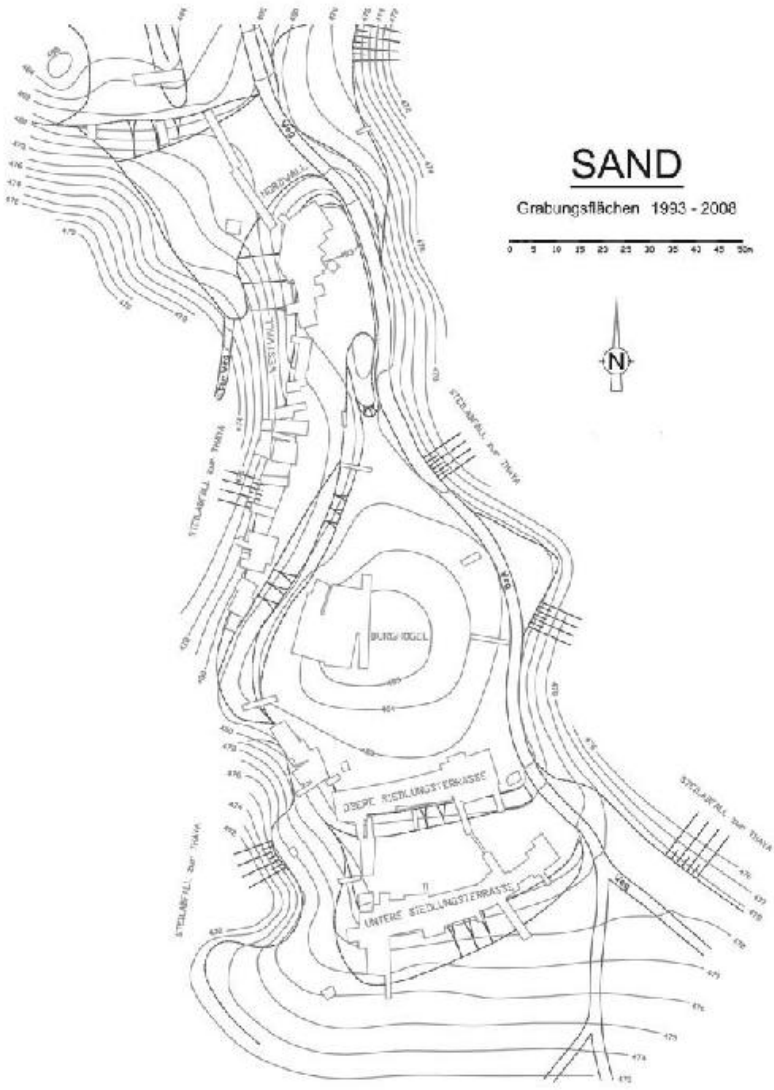

Figure 9.3. Sand near Oberpfaffendorf, general plan of the excavations (After Felgenhauer-Schmiedt 2011, 552, Fig. 1).

The main fortified sites in 9th- to 10th-century central Europe include Mikulčice (Poláček 2007; 2002; for reasons of clarity references on sites are only provided on first mention), Břeclav-Pohansko (Macháček 2007; 2010), Zalavár (Szőke 2007a; 2007b), as well as the settlement agglomeration at Staré Město and Uherské Hradiště (Galuška 2005; 2008). Extensive excavations have taken place at these fortified settlements since the 1950s. Evidence from other sites is available from smaller-scale excavations, for example

from Gars-Thunau (Herold 2008; 2011), Sand near Oberpfaffendorf (Felgenhauer-Schmiedt 2008), Pobedim (Bialeková 1998), Ducové (Ruttkay 2005) and Nitra (Fusek and Bednár 2008).

Two basic models emerge for the positioning of these fortified settlements in the landscape: fortified hilltop settlements (*e.g.* Gars-Thunau [Fig. 9.2], Sand near Oberpfaffendorf [Fig. 9.3]) and fortified 'islands', situated on sand dunes in (formerly) swampy areas in the floodplains of rivers (*e.g.* Mikulčice, Staré Město, Břeclav-Pohansko [Fig. 9.4] and Zalavár). The fortified hilltop settlements are usually smaller in size (*c.* 0.5–12 ha) than the fortifications lying in floodplains (up to *c.* 28 ha). The availability of both types of natural environment (hilltop and floodplain) in many areas, but the use of only one of them for 9th- to 10th-century fortified settlements suggests that location was the result of conscious cultural choice. However, no clear-cut differences are detectable in the structure of fortification ramparts, the types of buildings, site layout or elements of material culture between these two groups of fortified settlements.

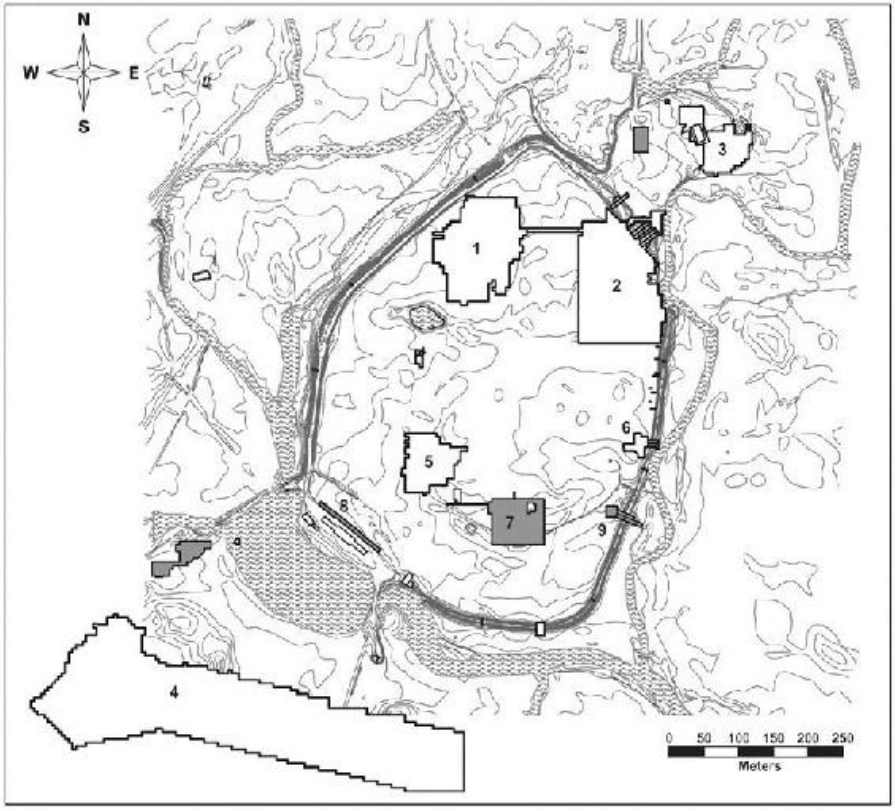

Figure 9.4. Břeclav-Pohansko, plan of the fortification with all excavated areas indicated; the 'Herrenhof' is situated in the excavated area no. 1 (After Macháček 2011, 22, Fig. 13).

Remains of earlier occupation phases are frequently found at both hilltop and floodplain sites, as for example at Gars-Thunau and Mikulčice. Many early medieval fortified hilltop settlements reuse late Bronze Age (*c*. 1000–800 BC) fortifications, with the early medieval defences usually superimposed on the earlier rampart (*e.g.* in Gars-Thunau). Since the number of favourable locations for settlement in the landscape was limited, it is logical that early medieval populations would have chosen to reoccupy strategically located late Bronze Age settlements. Another aspect to consider is that (re)occupying the settlements of 'ancestors' might have been used to legitimate one's claims, for example claims of control of land (Bradley 2002). Within the unstable socio-political climate of the 9th and 10th centuries in central Europe, the need to legitimise and reinforce claims of political authority and authenticity would have been real and powerful. Thus, in addition to the fortification as a sign of power and the choice of a hilltop or a floodplain site, the existence of earlier occupation phases might have been perceived as an important symbolic component of fortified settlements.

Some of the fortified sites – both fortifications in floodplains and on hilltops – include a 'manor farm' (*Herrenhof;* for the manor farm of Gars-Thunau see Figs 9.5–9.7). The manor farm was usually separated from the rest of the fortified area by a palisade (wooden fence). A church with a cemetery and one or more other buildings are often found within the palisade; some of the buildings probably served as dwellings, others as 'assembly' or 'reception' halls. The manor farms vary in size between *c*. 80 × 100 m (Gars-Thunau, Břeclav-Pohansko) and 25 × 32 m (Zalaszabar-Borjúállás sziget – see Müller 1995 and Fig. 9.8 below). The term 'manor farm' is used in this paper as a technical term in the place of the German word *Herrenhof*, as there is no accepted expression for these central European structures in English. A direct translation of *Herrenhof* would be 'lord's farm'. In western Europe, the term 'manor farm' is often used to mean a bipartite estate, but at the current state of research it is not clear if the *Herrenhof* structures in central Europe were bipartite estates.

The conceptual origin of central European 'manor farms' has not

yet been fully explained. A connection to the Carolingian royal palaces (*Pfalz*) has been assumed (*e.g.* Dostál 1975; Ruttkay 1998; Macháček 2001), but similar structures have also been identified in Bulgaria (Henning and Milo 2007). Moreover, the structure of (late) antique *villae* also displays some similar traits (Brather 2008, 110). Noticeably, structures similar to manor farms are not currently known from the study region between the 7th and mid-/late 8th centuries.

Some of the fortified sites, including Břeclav-Pohansko and Mikulčice, display a complex system of 'suburbia' or baileys, areas adjacent to the main fortification. These can be fortified, but usually on a smaller scale than the main defensive works. A possible function of these areas, on the basis of the current available archaeological evidence, might have been to house the military entourage of the ruling family of the fortification (*e.g.* Vignatiová 1992).

The sites typically were fortified by ramparts made of a combination of wood, stones and earth. The basic element of the fortification ramparts is a timbered caisson (box) construction made of wood and filled with earth or with a mixture of earth and stones. In some cases, a layer of timbers (lying perpendicular to the line of the wall or cross-wise) beneath the caisson construction served as a foundation. This construction work could feature an external facing wall, or one on each side, but some ramparts lack a facing wall. The face can comprise quarry stones of different types; at many sites stones which naturally broke into flat pieces were preferred. Stones, sediment layers and wooden elements in these ramparts often show signs of fire; however, no consensus has yet been reached concerning the origin of or the reason for these fires.

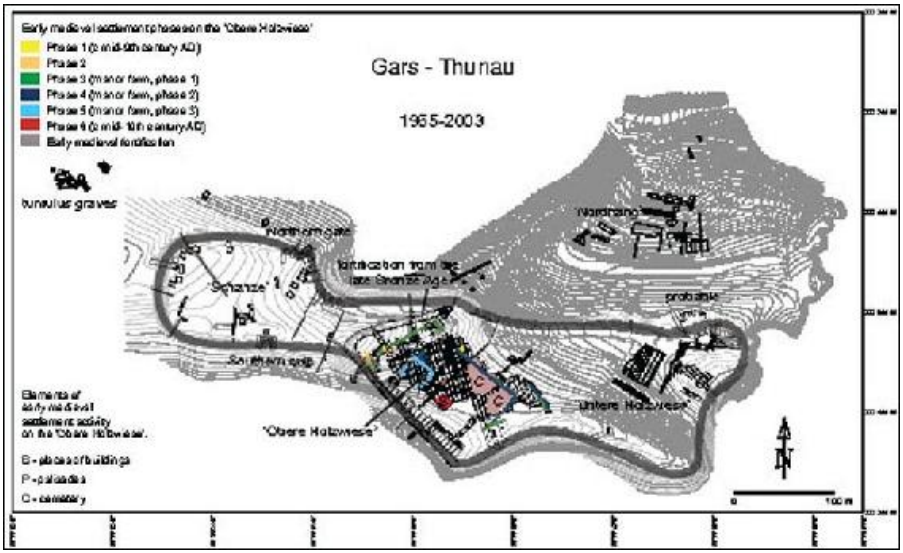

Figure 9.5. The fortified settlement of Gars-Thunau, Austria. Parts of the settlement, excavation trenches, gates, fortification ramparts and settlement phases (Drawing by María Antonia Negrete Martínez [Department of Prehistoric and Medieval Archaeology, University of Vienna] and Hajnalka Herold).

Dendrochronology holds much promise for providing precise dates for the wooden caisson construction of the fortification ramparts. The dendrochronological dating of 9th- to 10th-century wood samples became possible in the study region by the end of the 1990s, largely based on the work of the late Jitka Vrbová-Dvorská. However, so far only a few dendrochronological dates have been published (for a summary of available dates see Herold 2012, 75–76, and Henning and Ruttkay 2011). Furthermore, the waney edge (the last grown year-ring of a tree, *Waldkante*) has usually not been preserved, and so even if there are dendrochronological dates, they generally provide only a *terminus post quem*, and not the exact year when the tree was cut. Another problem is establishing the chronological sequence of the fortification rampart and of other excavated features within the fortifications, since in most cases no stratigraphic sequence of these exists.

The best-preserved building remains in these early medieval fortified settlements are the remains of churches. These were the first edifices to be built in stone, although remains of wooden churches have also been excavated. Only in very few cases are other stone-built structures traced: these include the ‘palaces’ of Mikulčice (*c.* 11 × at

least 26 m) and Staré Město (in the area 'Na Dědine'; *c.* 10 × at least 19 m), which are usually reconstructed with stone walls; to these can be added the recently uncovered remains of a similar building at Zalavár (Szőke 2014, 100, Fig. 77). These buildings are likely to have been large 'assembly' or 'reception' halls. Most other known buildings at these sites appear timber-built or with wattle-and-daub walls. Some of them, especially larger constructions, might have served as 'assembly' or 'reception' halls, similar to the stone buildings mentioned above; examples include Stará Kouřim, 89 × 10 m (Šolle 1966), Levý Hradec, approximately L-shaped, 15 × 5 and 10 × 5 m (Borkovský 1953) and Uherské Hradiště-Sady, L-shaped, 40 × 10 m and 10 × 10 m, the latter building is usually interpreted as the main building of a monastery (Galuška 2005).

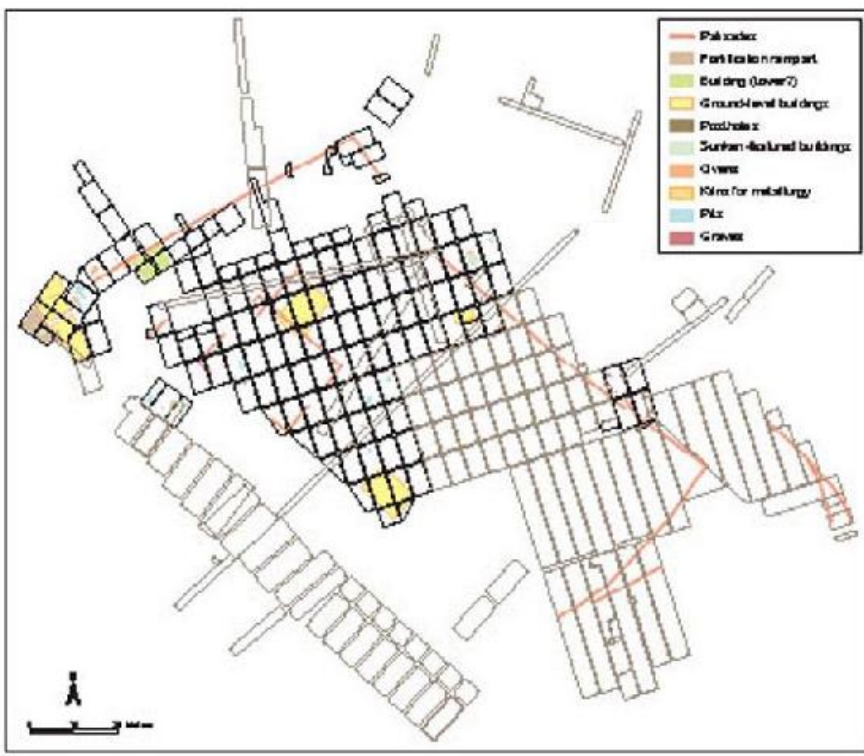

Figure 9.6. Gars-Thunau, schematic plan of settlement features in the central area of the site where the 'Herrenhof' is situated (Plan by Hajnalka Herold).

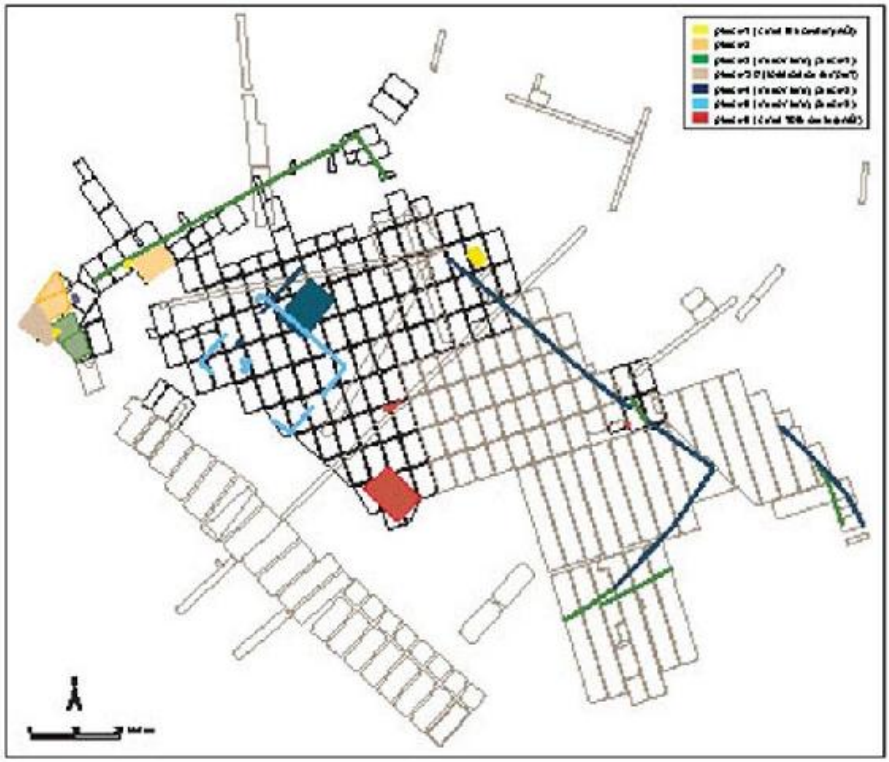

Figure 9.7. Gars-Thunau, schematic plan of the settlement phases in the central area of the site where the 'Herrenhof' is situated (Plan by Hajnalka Herold).

In order to better understand the role of central European 9th- to 10th-century fortified sites in the contemporary settlement network, it is also necessary to examine the available archaeological evidence for other sites in the region (see also Herold 2011; 2012). The three main categories of settlements known from this area are fortified sites, unfortified rural settlements and, in former Roman territories south and west of the River Danube, Roman sites with early medieval occupation layers. These sites are complemented by cemeteries, most of which feature inhumation graves lacking any known above-ground structures or markers; however, some tumulus cemeteries have also been recorded (*e.g.* at Gars-Thunau). Cemeteries connected to churches are principally known from fortified sites.

It seems likely that fortifications with a fairly simple layout and usually of smaller size, such as Gars-Thunau, were the seats (or one of the seats) of distinguished families. Thus they are likely to have served as centres for their territories for economic, administrative, defensive and ritual/religious matters. It is indeed very probable that the

emergence of the sites discussed here relates to the reorganisation of elites in the regions concerned. It is interesting to note, however, that the representation of these remodelled elites follows similar principles in the investigated border regions of the Carolingian Empire and its successor states on both the interior and exterior of the Empire's supposed frontiers.

The more complex sites, such as Mikulčice and possibly also Staré Město, appear to represent a different type of settlement concept. The central unit of a 'palace' and of a large church (church no. 3) at Mikulčice is surrounded by units made up of smaller churches and possible other buildings. This spatial arrangement could be interpreted as the central representative unit of a ruler and surrounding smaller units belonging to other, dependent, 'noble families'. These 'noble families' might have had their main seat(s) elsewhere, for example at one or more of the aforementioned fortified sites of simpler layout. Of course, this interpretation needs to be verified by further research, but the existence of these two different types of sites can certainly aid in developing an improved understanding of social complexity in 9th- to 10th-century central Europe.

The Natural Environment of the 9th- to 10th-Century Fortified Sites

The emergence of fortified sites in the 9th to 10th centuries marked the largest intrusion into the natural environment since the Roman period in most parts of the study area. These settlements were of a much larger scale and also held a larger number of inhabitants than the currently known settlements of the 6th to 8th centuries AD. Thus the impact on the environment can be expected to have been more intensive in the 9th to 10th centuries than before, albeit with likely strong regional differences. However, not only did the settlements and their inhabitants influence the environment, but they were also affected by environmental changes, be they ones they caused themselves or ones they had no influence over.

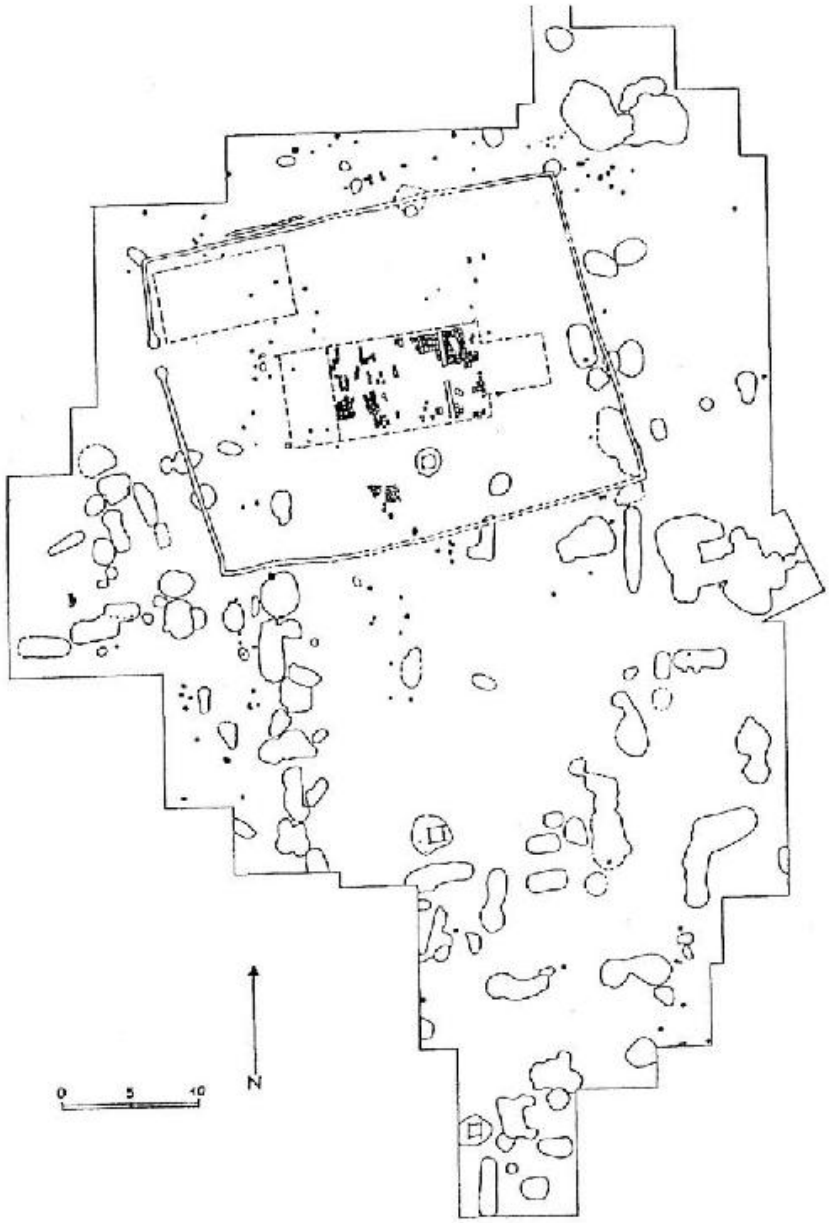

Figure 9.8. Zalaszabar – Borjúállás sziget, plan of the 'Herrenhof' (After Szőke 2007, 424, Fig. 8).

Regarding climate, archaeobotanical remains from Mikulčice indicate the presence of plants at the site in the 9th and 10th centuries which prefer a warm climate and do not grow there today (Opravil 1998a, 330). Analysis of mollusca from Gars-Thunau points to a warm

and dry climate in the same period (Frank 2004, 110–117 and 127–128). Based on dendrochronological analyses made in Gars-Thunau, the years 810 and 826 were especially dry (Cichocki 1998–99, 56). The position of archaeological sites in the landscape in the vicinity of Zalavár also suggests a dryer climate in the 9th century, since earlier and later archaeological sites (similarly to today's villages) mostly occupy higher lying areas than the sites of the 9th century (Herold 2012, 71, Fig. 8).

The water level in Lake Balaton, located in south-western Hungary, in the vicinity of Zalavár, is known to have been lower in the 9th and 10th century than today (estimated at 102.4 m above the level of the Adriatic Sea, as opposed to 104.1 m today; see Gyulai 2005, 271). The area around Zalavár-Vársziget (Hungarian for 'Castle Island') is nevertheless referred to as containing 'marshes' in 9th-century written sources (*e.g. 'in quodam nemore et palude Salae fluminis', Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* [11.] – see Lošek 1997, 122; *'urbs paludarum', Annales Fuldenses*, for the year 896, ed. Kurze 1891, 130), and according to the analysis of archaeobotanical evidence 'a large area of open water' must have existed near the site (Gyulai 2010, 178). Combined, such data appear to be in accord with a climate change postulated for central Europe for AD 700/750–900, becoming warmer and drier, following the colder times of the 'Great Migration Period', and leading up to the 'Medieval Warm Period' of the high Middle Ages (Frisnyák 2000, 83; Wiethold 2000, 74–75).

The main anthropogenic influence on the surroundings of these fortified sites was deforestation, as has been argued for the areas of Břeclav-Pohansko (Doláková *et al.* 2010, 2547), Mikulčice (Jankovská *et al.* 2003, 71–72) and Zalavár (Zólyomi 1980, 123; Gyulai 2005, 272), based on palynological analysis. It must be observed, however, that the dating of some of the pollen sequences available for the region is somewhat problematic; future investigations with a larger number of C14 dates from the relevant periods are needed to bring further insights here. In the Carpathian Basin (today's Hungary and the adjacent regions), the amount of areas occupied by forests is thought to have decreased from 70% *c.* AD 1 to 30–40% by *c.* AD 1000 (Frisnyák 2000, 84). Palynological analysis in the vicinity of Lake Balaton shows not only the decrease of tree-pollen, but also the increase of cereal and other non-tree pollen, suggesting the spread of

agriculture and the increasing number of settlements as well as forest clearance, which is thought to have taken place from *c*. AD 800 onwards (Zólyomi 1980, 123; Gyulai 2005, 272; see also Juhász 2007).

Nonetheless, based on zooarchaeological analysis, closed forest areas still seem to have existed in the environs of various 9th- to 10th-century fortified sites. This is shown by the presence of wisent and red deer, as opposed to only few individuals of roe deer and hare, as at Zalavár (see Bökönyi 1963), Gars-Thunau (Kanelutti 1990) and Sand near Oberpfaffendorf (Pucher and Schmitzberger 1999). In addition, the frequent presence of wild pigs might be connected to marshy areas in the vicinity of the sites (Bökönyi 1963, 367; Kanelutti 1990, 106). The noted description of Zalavár as lying 'in the forests and marshes of the River Sala' supports these zooarchaeological results (*Conversio* [11.], Lošek 1997, 122). The remains of high-status game animals (wisent and red deer, very often male animals, as well as wild boar) in the zooarchaeological record of sites such as Gars-Thunau, Zalavár and Sand does not only inform on their natural environment, but also shows the pursuit of hunting in this territory, very likely an activity of high-status persons and possibly coupled with an early form of hunting privileges for distinguished members of society (Kanelutti 1990, 25).

A detailed account of the vegetation and its changes through time was given for Mikulčice by Emanuel Opravil, including aspects of geomorphological change in the surrounding sand dunes and floodplains (Opravil 1998a; Opravil 2000a). One essential conclusion of his work is that today's vegetation at the site is not the same as in the 9th and 10th centuries, primarily with the alluvial forests changing from hardwood to softwood during the course of the High Middle Ages and the early modern period (Opravil 1998a, 331). On the basis of the more limited archaeobotanical data available for Břeclav-Pohansko (Opravil 2000b) and the settlement agglomeration around Staré Město and Uherské Hradiště (Opravil 1998b), it is assumed that no great differences existed between these sites and Mikulčice in terms of the natural environment (Opravil 2000b, 168). Another important conclusion of Opravil's work is that the landscape at Mikulčice was more accentuated and less eroded in the Early Middle Ages than today (Opravil 1998a, 331). Erosion is an important

factor to consider at other fortified sites too, especially in the case of hilltop settlements.

How the landscape in the vicinity of fortified sites was shaped by the existence of agricultural fields and/or gardens has not been examined in great detail so far. Fields in the immediate vicinity of some fortified settlements are assumed (*e.g.* Sand near Oberpfaffendorf, Felgenhauer-Schmiedt 2011, 554), while at others (*e.g.* Břeclav-Pohansko, Macháček 2007, 45) it is proposed that the inhabitants largely relied on agricultural products from surrounding settlements. The archaeobotanical finds of Gars-Thunau include species that could form part of the vegetation of woodland clearings and thus suggest that deforestation was carried out (Popovtschak and Zwiauer 2003). The existence of 'gardens' at or near Břeclav-Pohansko is supported not only by fruit remains, but also by the occurrence of wood from fruit trees at the site (Opravil 2000b, 169). Similarly, at Gars-Thunau, the occurrence of grape-vine, a type of cucumber, and plums suggests that the site or its surroundings included 'gardens', although the exact location of these garden-spaces cannot be specified (Popovtschak and Zwiauer 2003).

The emergence of frequent and strong floods was an environmental change with far-reaching consequences, primarily for fortified sites lying in a floodplain. Floods seem to have occurred already during the 9th and 10th centuries, as shown by palynological analysis at Břeclav-Pohansko; the analysis indicated that the ramparts of the site served not only for military defence and/or display, but also as protection against floods from the nearby River Dyje/Thaya (Doláková *et al.* 2010, 2549). However, in the high Middle Ages, floods became stronger and more frequent, most probably as a result of deforestation and agriculture (Opravil 1998a, 330–331; Opravil 1999, 178). These floods are likely to have eventually contributed to the abandonment of some of the fortified sites (*e.g.* Mikulčice, Poláček 1999, 230).

The investigation of the natural environment of archaeological sites and its changes through time is currently a dynamic and rapidly developing research field. Realising how decisive certain environmental factors, and the results of anthropogenic changes to the natural environment, might have been for the emergence, development and abandonment of these key sites is an ongoing

process. Work in the next decades on this topic will likely greatly enhance and most probably modify our understanding of all investigated past environments, including, of course, those of the sites examined in this paper.

Discussion and Conclusion

The archaeological evidence from the fortified sites discussed above suggests that the Carolingian Empire and its successor states were far from being the only player in 9th- and 10th-century central Europe in terms of cultural, political and economic influences. Byzantium also had a significant impact on this period and region, evident both in items of material culture (*e.g.* by comparing jewellery from central Europe in Hrubý 1955 and 'Byzantine' jewellery, objects as well as pictorial sources, in Bosselmann-Ruickbie 2011) and in building remains, primarily churches (Poláček 2008; 2009; Galuška 2005). It is, however, much more complicated to draw a picture of economic organisation in 9th- to 10th-century central Europe. Whether, or to what extent, the manorial system of western European agriculture, largely based on bipartite estates (Verhulst 2002, 33–37; Wickham 2009, 529–551; Theuws 2008), was established in this region cannot currently be ascertained with great confidence. Finding possible connections to any 'Byzantine type' agriculture and agricultural organisation (Arthur *et al.* 2012; Laiou 2005; Whittow 2007, 487–489) is made difficult by obvious climatic differences between most parts of the Byzantine Empire and central Europe; in addition, our image for the Byzantine zones themselves is not clear.

Concerning trade networks, central Europe appears to have been connected to both 'western'/Carolingian and 'eastern'/Byzantine networks for luxury goods (Galuška *et al.* 2012; Profantová 2001; Poláček 2007), but large amounts of bulk products (such as lava quernstones from Mayen or large amounts of ceramics from the Rhineland– see Steuer 1999, 411–412) have not been identified in this area. Many strap-ends and belt-mounts from 9th- to 10th-century central Europe are frequently termed 'Frankish', but as the Frankish royal court(s) are known to have used and imitated elements of Byzantine lifestyle and costume (*e.g.* McCormick 1986, 364–365; Wickham 2009, 410), the separation of these two categories can be problematic.

In terms of political history, the question is often asked where exactly the border between the Carolingian Empire and 'Great Moravia' was situated. Since written sources suggest that the borders of 'Great Moravia' were in constant flux (see Třeštík 2000; Wolfram 1995, 315–321), the answer might simply be that the borders were at different places in different parts of the 9th and early 10th century. The six building phases at the fortified site of Gars-Thunau, reconstructed by the recent analysis of archaeological finds and features (Herold 2008; 2011; see also Figs 9.5–9.7 in this article), cover a period of *c*. 150–200 years. This means that one layout might have been used for about 30 years, which is the interval often identified with one human generation, in this case possibly associated with generations of one or more 'leading families' connected to the site. The archaeological analysis thus reveals Gars-Thunau as a rapidly changing and possibly also contested fortified site in the 9th and 10th centuries AD that not only saw different versions of spatial layout, but most likely also various changes of political authority. Future research can determine if similar series of dynamic transformations are detectable at other sites, and thereby can aid in developing our understanding of political, social and economic change in 9th- to 10th-century central Europe.

The fortified sites or 'defended communities' discussed here can be seen to have had different functions and symbolic meanings. The fact that these sites yield the richest material culture and the most complex building remains indicates that they were the seats of social elites, which further emphasised their status and claims by fortifications. These fortifications symbolised the amount of workforce they were able to mobilise and at the same time created a distinct spatial unit separated from the rest of the landscape. Ramparts on hilltops might have been visible from further afield, while fortifications in floodplains were possibly only apparent when directly approaching the site.

Due to a lack of relevant written sources, we usually do not know who built these fortifications; one exception here is Zalavár, which is usually identified with the settlement mentioned in the *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* as built by Priwina with support from the Frankish Empire (*'munimen aedificare'*, *Conversio* [11.] – see Lošek 1997, 122). However, even though (if the information in the *Conversio*

is correct) we know Priwina's name, the source does not provide unambiguous information on his initial rank or social status. Other sites mentioned in written sources include *'urbs antiqua Rastizi'* and *'civitas Dowina'* (*Annales Fuldenses*, for the years 871 and 864 respectively, ed. Kurze 1891, 74 and 62). However, these names cannot be unequivocally identified with any known archaeological sites, and the texts offer no detailed background information on the lords/builders of these sites nor on the structure of their other properties. Indeed, it is far from clear if the notion of private property, especially for land and settlements (as opposed to portable objects), existed outside of the Frankish realm.

It is widely assumed that individual lords built these fortified sites in 9th- to 10th-century central Europe, and that they served as the seats of these lords and their families. Whether these lords and families had one or more seats has not been determined so far. Again, a frequent implicit assumption is that families connected to the 'feudal' system of the Frankish world would have had multiple seats, while 'Slavic' lords outside of the (East) Frankish Kingdom would have operated a system based on (tribal) territories, with one central site in this territory serving as their seat. These assumptions might well oversimplify the situation in the 9th and 10th centuries. The lack of written sources makes it difficult to detect a higher organisational level behind the construction of these fortified sites that could, for example, resemble the sizeable building programme of the Alfredian *burhs* in England in roughly the same period (on the latter, see Christie, this volume).

Finds of arrowheads, including Hungarian rhomboid types (*e.g.* Kouřil 2003), which are supposed to signify Hungarian raids in the 10th century, suggest – even if one takes into account the inherent uncertainties connected to extrapolating from such finds – that military attacks did take place in and around fortified sites of the 9th and 10th centuries in central Europe. Based on results from dendrochronological analysis, it has been hypothesized recently that many, if not all, of these fortifications were erected as a defence against Hungarian raids (Henning and Ruttkay 2011). If the interpretation of the dendrochronological results is correct and the ramparts were constructed in the late 9th/early 10th century, they must have been built around already existing settlements, which were

either previously unfortified or else protected by the remains of prehistoric ramparts; alternatively, the construction of ramparts in the late 9th to early 10th century was preceded by the removal of previous early medieval defences. Further sequences of dendrochronological dates and their connection with the overall stratigraphy at the fortified sites can shed more light on this issue.

The above considerations indicate that fortifications and fortified communities in 9th- to 10th-century central Europe are likely to have had a range of different functions and symbolic meanings, of which the display of status and the possession of a secure position in a socially and militarily unstable environment will have been prominent. As mentioned, investigations at Břeclav-Pohansko have shown that ramparts could also have very practical everyday functions, for example in defending a site against floods, which, although not a directly military aspect, still gave the community inside a more secure and privileged status than that of unfortified settlements.

Future research at these key sites of the late phase of the Early Middle Ages is likely to concentrate, on the one hand, on giving a comprehensive picture of the sites and their surrounding landscapes on a central European scale, without the limitations of present-day political borders, and, on the other hand, on placing this region into a wider European perspective. Investigating aspects of social and economic organisation, including, for example seeking the nature of social hierarchisation within the communities, examining the existence of the notion of private property of land outside of the Frankish realm, and a comparison with data from Byzantine areas, will play a central role in this process.

Note

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Bibliography

Abbreviations

AV ČR: Akademie Věd České Republiky [Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic]

MPK: Mitteilungen der Prähistorischen Kommission der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften

ÖAW: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften

RGA: Beck H., Geuenich, D. and Steuer, H. (eds), *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*. Berlin and New York, de Gruyter.

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10

The Beginnings of Medieval Fortifications in the Late Carolingian Period from a Swiss Perspective

Adriano Boschetti

Introduction

The sequence of Viking/Norse, Saracen and Hungarian raids and invasions which occurred from the mid-9th century onwards was the prompt for the first new phase of extensive construction of defences – urban, rural and also monastic – in western and central Europe since early Byzantine times. Some of these fortification works were renewals or reinforcements of older walls, but we can also trace the erection of new defended spaces, not all of specifically military scope. This paper explores this crucial, first medieval defensive 'reaction' in present-day Switzerland – a territory too often neglected in European castle studies – via sites and structures identified in both archaeological excavations and architectural investigations as well as in written records (Fig. 10.1). Critical evaluations of these data will be offered in order to ascertain for each individual case whether their fortification belongs fully to the Early Middle Ages or whether earlier constructions were reused.

Real Threats: Norsemen, Hungarians and Saracens

Norse assaults

Already from the early 9th century Viking/Norse raids against

exposed coastal sites, notably trading centres and monasteries, had begun to spread fear along the northern and western border areas of the Frankish Empire (Brather 2003; Willemsen 2004). One telling example relates to the monastic community on the Atlantic island of Noirmoutier: the monastery was raided by Vikings so many times that in 819 the monks fled inland to Saint-Philbert-de-Grandlieu; they were displaced again in 858 and, after several interim stops in various places, they eventually arrived in Tournus in Burgundy in 875 (Poupardin 1905). While there is no reference to the area of present-day Switzerland ever having been attacked by the Norse, raids along rivers, often deep into France and Germany, impacted on both society and economy more widely, prompting, for example, many towns to be newly fortified. The Norse threat to the western Frankish Empire did not ease until after the Duchy of Normandy was founded in 911 (Le Maho 2006).

Hungarian raids

In 895 nomadic Hungarians from the area between the River Dnjepr and the Danube Delta began to migrate into the Carpathian Basin, subsequently mounting raids in all directions, even after settling in what is today Hungary (Schulze-Dörrlamm 2006). At least 50 raids on central, western and southern Europe are documented between AD 899 and 955 and these can be divided into three phases: first, the Great Moravian Empire and northern Italy were targeted; the second phase, between 906/7 and 926, affected primarily the Eastern Frankish Empire as well as Lorraine and Burgundy. In both of these two phases, the Hungarians' swift mounted raids sought not to include sieges of towns or fortified sites or to engage open battles with enemies, but rather aimed at a gathering of portable spoil/booty, with monasteries and churches a particular target. Monastic sources duly offer accounts or records of various of these damaging raids. According to the St. Gall Annals, Alamannia was hit in 909/10, 913 and 926: Abbot Gozpert of Rheinau was slain in the summer of 910; Basel was looted in 917 (Duft 1957, 15; Kellner 1997, 123–132; Demotz 2008, 228); and in 926 Hungarians raided the St. Gall abbey, assailed again monasteries in Rheinau and Säckingen and even laid siege to the episcopal city of Constance. That same year King Henry I declared a truce and agreed to pay tribute to the Hungarians. The king

made use of the cessation of hostilities to reorganise his defences and to decree a *Burgenordnung* (fortification order) at the Diet of Worms in 926. The order, not actually preserved, is thought to have commanded the building of fortifications, some no doubt makeshift emergency measures (Widukind von Corvey, ed. Waitz 1839, 423f).

When in 933 Henry stopped the tribute payments so the third phase of Hungarian attacks commenced: the first assault was repelled in Saxony and Thuringia; the raiders then turned attention on western France and southern Italy, but at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955 they were defeated decisively by King Otto I, putting an end to the Hungarian raids into the West (Kellner 1997). Forays on the Byzantine East also ended following a sizeable Hungarian defeat at Arcadiopolis in 970. Around 974 Otto I sent Bishop Brun, a former monk of St. Gall, to baptise the Hungarian Prince Géza, whose son would later become the first Hungarian King Stephen I; subsequently more pacific relations prevailed between Hungary and the West.

Saracen raids

Ever since the Middle Ages there have been legends about Saracen invasions and it is clear that contemporary sources often, rather surprisingly, confused Saracens and Hungarians. The Saracens were probably Arab or Berber pirates. Since the Umayyad conquest of the Visigothic Kingdom in the early 8th century, but after their defeat at the hands of Charles Martel at Poitiers, there were repeated encounters with Saracens in the south of France and in north-west and western Italy. From around AD 890 Fraxinetum (la Garde-Freinet) near Saint-Tropez was established as an important base where, according to the St. Gall chronicler Ekkehard IV, Saracens lived in peace side by side with the local population. But from 906 at the latest, attacks began to be mounted against Italy and various Alpine regions and fairly swiftly they took control of important passes (Fig. 10.2). Around 940 Saracen raiders destroyed the monastery at Saint-Maurice in the Valais region. Abbot Odo of Cluny and Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg are said to have found the monastery burnt to the ground, prompting Odo to request the West Frankish king's assistance in rebuilding the complex (Eggel 2007; Steiner 2009).

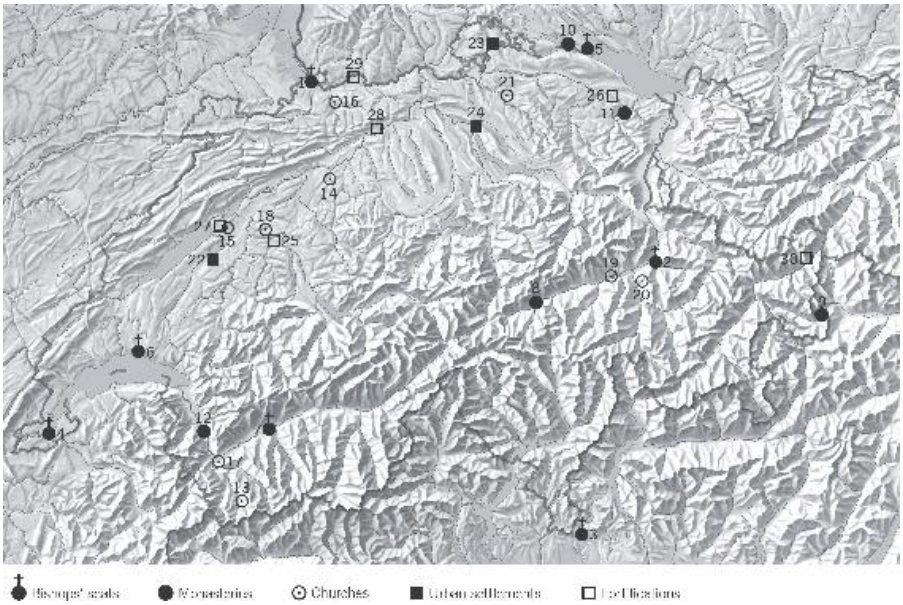

Figure 10.1. Location map of sites mentioned in the text (Map by author): Bishops' seats: 1. Basel; 2. Chur; 3. Como; 4. Geneva; 5. Constance; 6. Lausanne; 7. Sion. Monasteries: 8. Disentis; 9. Müstair; 10. Reichenau; 11. St. Gall; 12. Saint-Maurice. Churches: 13. Bourg-Saint-Pierre; 14. Herzogenbuchsee; 15. Ins; 16. Liestal; 17. Martigny; 18. Meikirch; 19. Sagogn; 20. Tomils; 21. Winterthur. Urban settlements: 22. Avenches; 23. Schaffhausen; 24. Zurich. Fortifications: 25. Bern (Bümpliz); 26. Häggenschwil (Waldburg); 27. Ins (Hasenburg); 28. Lostorf (Gross Chastel); 29. Möhlin (Bürkli); 30. Ramosch (Tschanüff).

After 936 Saracens reached the episcopal city of Chur, the territory of Alamannia and probably even the Abbey of St. Gall (Kaiser 2008, 118f; Muraro 2009, 102–110). There exists a catalogue of church treasure compiled at the monastery of Disentis; Father I. Müller dates it to the time of the Saracen invasions since in this period the monastic treasures had to be transferred to Zurich (Müller 1932, 75–98). Bishop Waldo of Chur complained about looting committed in his diocese by *continua depraedatione Saracenorum*. By the time Otto I stopped at Disentis on his way back from Italy across the Lukmanier Pass in January 965, the monastery appears to have only partially been restored (Müller 1932, 19–25 and 138; Kaiser 2008, 119f). According to Steiner (2009, 489), the place name *Pontresina* in the Upper Engadine can be connected to the persistent presence of Saracens in the Grisons; it was recorded as *Pontem Sarisinam* as early as 1137.

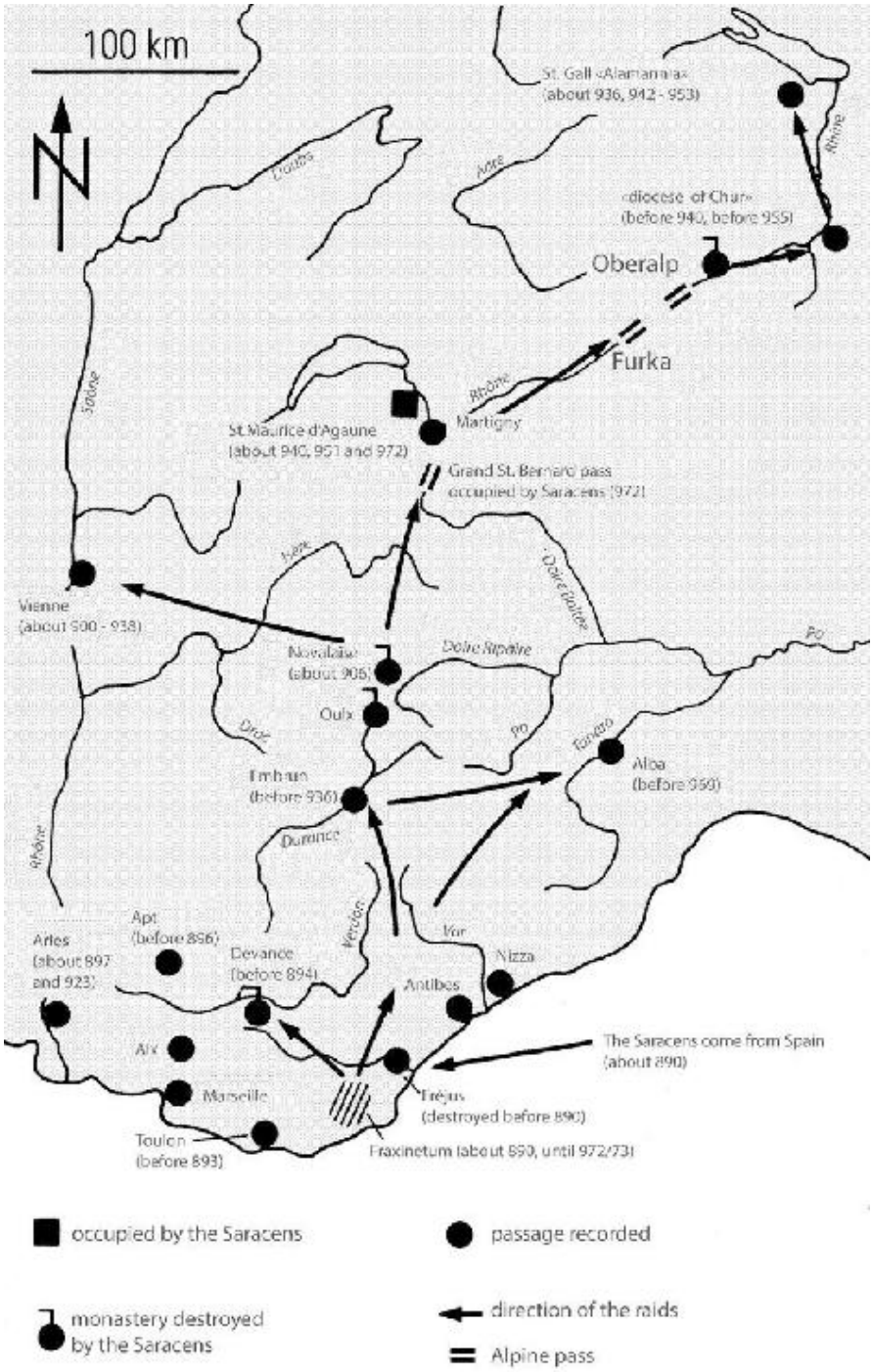

Figure 10.2. Saracens in the Alps in the 9th and 10th centuries (Source: Kaiser 2008).

The Saracens increasingly deployed the tactics of kidnapping (for ransoms) and mounting small targeted attacks while avoiding well-

equipped armies. In 972/73 they took Abbot Majolus of Cluny as a hostage on the Great St. Bernard Pass (Eggel 2007, 357; Demotz 2008, 230f; Steiner 2009, 484–488). This prompted Count William I of Provence to retaliate by ejecting the Saracens from southern France in 973.

Archaeological Evidence of the Raids – Examples from Switzerland

Categories of finds

Only scant traces of both the Hungarian and the Saracen raids exist (Fig. 10.3). The first category of finds comprises artefacts whose main areas of distribution lie within the regions where the raiders originated from, one example being the typical Hungarian arrowheads which have come to light at various Swiss sites (Matt 1981; Meyer 1977; Moser 1970; Schulze-Dörrlamm 2006; Zimmermann 2000; *Annual Review of Swiss Archaeology* 94, 2011, 285) (Fig. 10.4). The second category includes burials of Norse, Hungarians or Saracens and of the victims of their attacks. The third group comprise traces of destruction which can plausibly be linked to events known from written records.

Hardly any research has to date been undertaken into two further potential categories of finds: coin hoards and potential staging posts. Coin hoards may have been concealed because of an impending raid and while 9th- and 10th-century coin hoards are generally quite rare, a remarkable accumulation of 10th-century coin hoarding can be observed in eastern Switzerland and the Grisons, which potentially is linked to Saracen and Hungarian raiding activity (Zäch and Diaz Tabernero 2003). Scope also exists for searching for traces of fortified staging posts or rest-camps set up by Saracens during their incursions in the Alpine valleys: makeshift hilltop fortifications whose names contain the term *Caslac (i.e. Castell[aci]um)*, for instance, are known in the Grisons and may relate to their bases (Fellmann 1974; Clavadetscher and Meyer 1984, 230; Glutz and Ron 2003).

Inscriptions

An impressive piece of evidence is the sarcophagus of Bishop Rudolf which originally stood in the southern altar tribunal of the east crypt

in the cathedral in Basel (Fig. 10.5). Composed of three lines, the inscription on the lid reads: *RVODO[LF]VS EP(ISCOPV)S / A PAGANIS OCCISVS / XIII [K(A)L(ENDAS)] AVGVSTI*. This records how the bishop was slain by 'pagans' on 20th July. It is generally accepted that Rudolf was the victim of a Hungarian raid reported by the Reichenau monk Hermann the Lame as having taken place in 917 (Baer 1932, 53–55; Kettler 1992, 45–47).

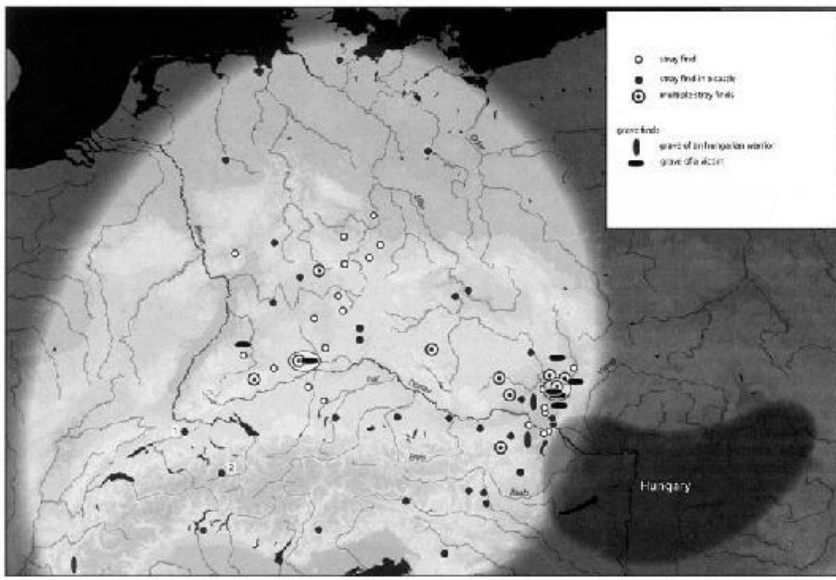

Figure 10.3. Preliminary distribution map of Hungarian weapons found west of the Hungarian settlement area and associated with Hungarian invasions into central, southern and western Europe between AD 899 and 955 (Source: Schulze-Dörrlamm 2006; Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz).

Another inscription from the church in Bourg-Saint-Pierre on the Great St Bernard Pass records the building's construction and dedication between 988 and 1019 because the previous church had been destroyed by *Ismaelita cohors* – in other words, Saracens (Jörg 1977, 125f).

Traces of destruction

In Saint-Maurice, where the monastery was destroyed probably around 940, archaeological investigations uncovered evidence to suggest that the renovation of the east choir of the Carolingian compound was overlying a burnt layer. Blondel (1950) linked this

construction to rebuilding after Saracen raids. The former episcopal church in Martigny – located on the route between the Great St Bernard Pass and Saint-Maurice – was twice partially rebuilt after a conflagration. Faccani dates the associated phases of construction to the period between the late 8th and 10th centuries (2007, 132f).

Excavations at the monastery in Disentis between 1906–34 and 1981–83 have shed some light on possible destruction through aggression: numerous fragments of stucco with monumental painting dating from the mid-8th century were recovered from the southern monastic church of St. Martin and re-used to level the area for the construction of its successor building. Originally argued as relating to destruction in Saracen raids of 940 (Stückelberg 1923; Weyer 1992; Studer 2005), the 1981 excavations instead showed that the stucco destruction and the replacement building dated to the Carolingian period. According to Sennhauser (2003, 80–86), the destruction deposits relate to earlier Hungarian raids. Still unpublished features from a church at Tomils in Canton Grisons have yielded even more distinctive evidence pointing to the same interpretation: both church and associated buildings were almost completely destroyed by a conflagration and partly demolished; before the church was rebuilt, burials were interred in the demolition rubble, five of which have been radiocarbon-dated to the mid-10th century (Jecklin-Tischhauser 2011).

Distinct and precisely dated evidence of destruction from warfare was found at St. Johann Abbey in Müstair in Canton Grisons. Built sometime after 775, the monastic compound was destroyed in a violent conflagration, with the timberwork set alight and the rich marble decoration in the church smashed. From the dendrochronological dating of one of the roof beams found in the rubble, the Carolingian south wing burnt down no earlier than AD 922 (Hurni *et al.* 2007, 110 and 113) (Fig. 10.6). Sometime after 958 the so-called Planta Tower was constructed on top of the ruins of a Carolingian building to the north of the northern annexe of the monastic church. The foundations cut into the rubble of the Carolingian monastery and the walls contain fragments of decorated marble blocks which likely formed part of the internal furnishings of the Carolingian monastic church. We may therefore conclude that the devastating fire at Müstair Abbey occurred in the mid-10th century.

Goll links the event to Saracen raids (Sennhauser 1999, 8–10; Boschetti-Maradi 2005, 16–18; Goll *et al.* 2007, 33).

The 9th- and 10th-Century Defensive Fortifications

Masonry towers

The so-called Planta Tower at the Abbey of St. John in Müstair is an extraordinarily well preserved tower dating from the 10th century which has seen very detailed archaeological investigation (Boschetti-Maradi 2005, 16–18; Goll 2006, 28–30) (Fig. 10.7). It was built as a fortified residential tower with four storeys on a near square ground-plan (13 × 12 m, with wall thickness of 1.7 m). Special architectural features are the seven horizontal layers or frames of tie-beams that were embedded into the masonry; it was from these beams that the date of construction could set dendrochronologically to between AD 958 and 961. The ground floor of the tower contained a cellar which was only accessible from the storey above. A flight of stairs led from a walled courtyard to a first-floor entrance. A cistern in the courtyard provided the water supply for the small fortified site. Two latrines were found, one in the northern wall of the first floor and one on the second floor; these could signify that the tower was residential. However, the architectural surveys, carried out in strictly limited sections, revealed no evidence of fireplaces or ovens belonging to the period of construction. A door in the southern façade on the third floor opened onto a balcony or timber-built wall-walk. The original roof was mono-pitched, sloping on the northern side with a 17-degree incline. A moat 3.5 m wide encircled the tower at a distance of at least 8.0 m; a palisade stood between it and the Planta tower, at a distance of 3.0–4.0 m from the tower (Fig. 10.8). It was levelled during the construction of the adjacent west wing built in 1035.

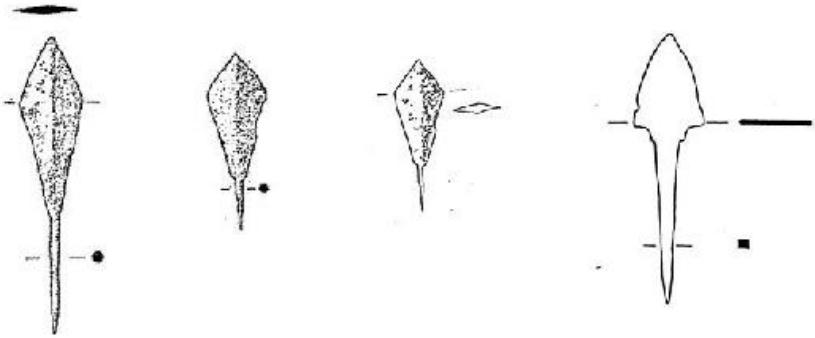

Figure 10.4. Hungarian arrowheads found in Switzerland (l–r): 1. Gross Chastel near Lostorf, Canton Solothurn; 2. Schiedberg near Sagogn, Canton Grisons; 3. unknown provenance; 4. Chur, Canton Grisons. Scale 1:2 (Sources: Matt 1981; Meyer 1977; Moser 1970; Zimmermann 2000).

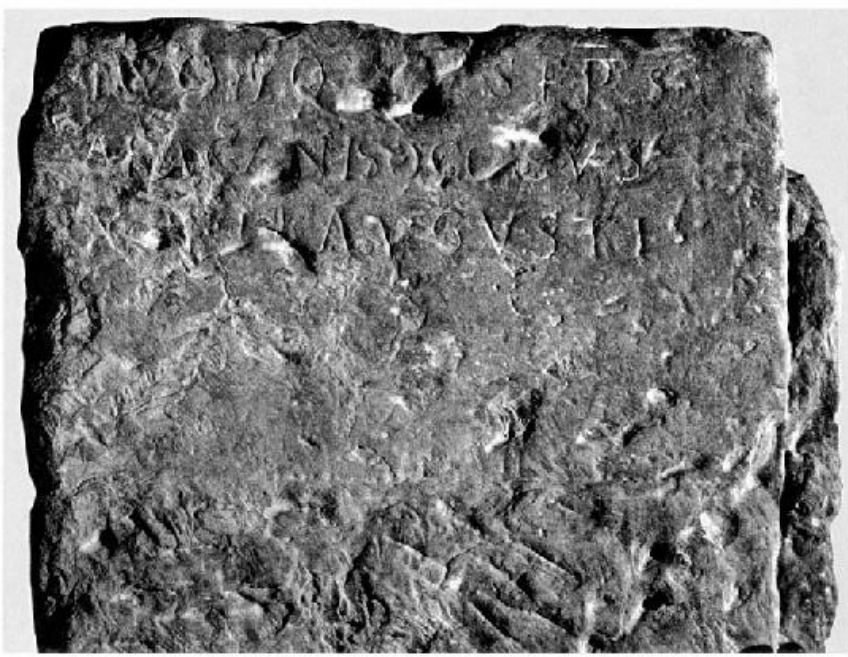

Figure 10.5. Basel, Münster (former cathedral). Cover slab of the sarcophagus of Bishop Rudolf, c. 917 (Image by Erik Schmidt, Basel).

As Müstair Abbey had been the property of the diocese and the seat of administration of the episcopal estates since 881, it was probably Bishop Hartbert of Chur who was responsible for construction of the Planta Tower (Sennhauser 1996b, 288–292). One

of King Otto I's most loyal followers, Hartbert, was bishop from *c*. 951 until his death in 971/72 (Excavations at Müstair Abbey have probably uncovered this bishop's grave – see Hotz 2007, 128). He was an important ally with regard to Otto's Italian policy since crucial Alpine passes were located in his diocese; indeed, Muraro (2009) has proposed that the Planta Tower was built using funds donated by Otto. It is indeed possible that the King returned from Italy via Müstair in 952 and saw the destroyed monastery. According to recent architectural surveys and dendrochronological analyses, Tschanüff Castle near Ramosch in the Engadine was probably also extended under Hartbert's rule in 957 (Wild 2012).

Figure 10.6. Müstair (Grisons), Monastery of St. John. Traces of burning attest to the destruction of the Carolingian south wing between AD 922 and 958 (Image by Stiftung für Forschung in Spätantike und Mittelalter, Zurzach/Archaeology Department of Canton Grisons).

Based on similarities with the Planta Tower, a fortified tower at the monastic site of Disentis is dated to the same period. Demolished in the 18th century, the Disentis tower is known only from excavated evidence and from a depiction of *c*. 1685. It stood in the west of the monastic compound, had a ground-plan of 10 × 11 m, with walls almost 2.0 m thick, and probably featured four upper storeys topped by battlements (Poeschel 1943, 72; Clavadetscher and Meyer 1984,

344f; Sennhauser 1996a, 216f).

Most fortified towers in the Alpine region and north of the Alps were erected only from the late 10th and 11th centuries. It is therefore difficult to ascertain the models for the monastic towers at Müstair and perhaps Disentis. Indeed, hardly any earlier monastic towers are known across the western Mediterranean region and most would have been earlier (i.e. late Roman) units that were later adapted. An example of this is a corner tower of the late antique *castrum* wall of Castelseprio in Lombardy, north Italy, which became part of the convent at Torba, founded in the 8th century (Brogiolo 2000; Surace 2003).

Figure 10.7. Müstair (Grisons), Monastery of St. John. The Planta Tower, built between AD 958 and 961, viewed from the north-east. Photograph taken prior to 1906 (Federal Archive for Monument Preservation, Bern).

Bank and ditch enclosures around monasteries and churches

King Charles the Bald reacted to the Norse attacks by fortifying the abbey complex at Saint-Denis in AD 869. The elaborate fortification, constructed, according to written records, in both timber and stone, is one of only a few such complexes not only mentioned in and dated by

historical sources but also examined archaeologically. We should anticipate similar extensive fortified monastic compounds being constructed in the later 9th and early 10th centuries, particularly in the peripheral regions of the Frankish Empire outside of former Roman spaces (cf. Christie and Hodges, this volume, on monastic defences).

Archaeological excavations carried out at relevant sites have uncovered ring ditches protecting them. Thus the early medieval church of St. Columbanus on Bregl da Haida near Sagogn in Canton Grisons was fortified with a curtain wall 1.4–1.8 m thick, built in at least two phases, and a ditch *c.* 4.5 m wide and 1.5 m deep (Sennhauser 2003, 158f; Gredig 2006) (Fig. 10.9). The nearby Schiedberg Castle ruins yielded an arrowhead, probably of Hungarian origin (Meyer 1977) (cf. Fig. 10.4). The church of Saint-Gervais on the right bank of the River Rhône in Geneva is considered as fortified with a ditch from the Carolingian period (Bonnet and Privati 2001) (Fig. 10.10), while the ditch around the church at Ins in Canton Bern is dated to the 10th or 11th century on the basis of burials of the 6th to 11th centuries (Gutscher 1992, 75–79). The church at Meikirch in Canton Bern was also fortified by means of a ring ditch, although its chronology is unclear (Eggenberger *et al.* 2004, 215f). The parish church of Winterthur in Canton Zurich may already have had a defensive ditch prior to the 11th century (Graf 2001, 82–84), and, set beside a Late Roman fort, Liestal in Canton Basel-Landschaft was perhaps fortified in the 9th or 10th century (Marti 2000, 180–183). Finally, close dating is available for the ditch girding the church in Herzogenbuchsee in Canton Bern: the ditch was V-shaped in section and accompanied by an internal palisade; the ditch post-dates an oak fragment dated to later than 911 (Sennhauser 1979, 154; Baeriswyl and Heege 2008, 150–155 and 162).

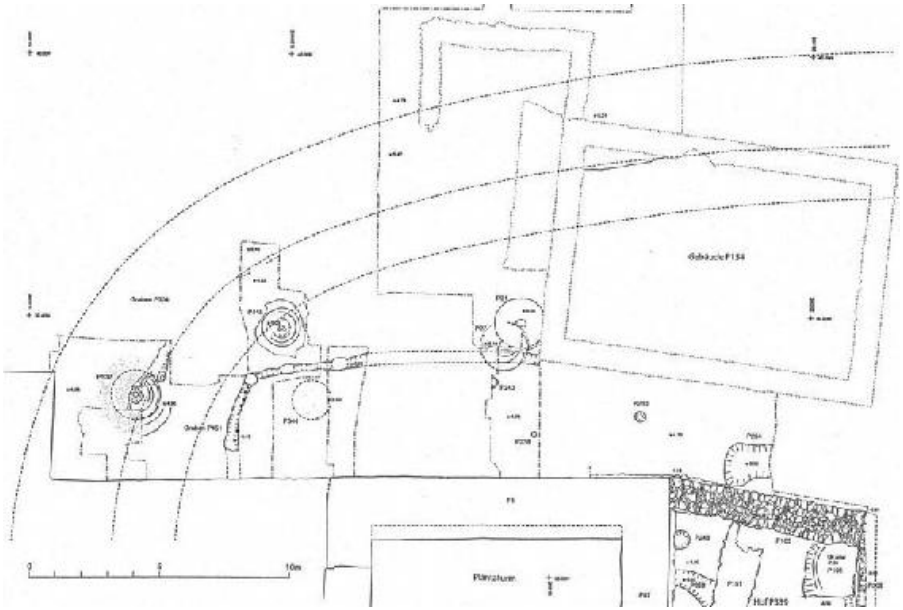

Figure 10.8. Müstair (Grisons), Monastery of St. John. Former fortification north of the Planta Tower. The north wall of the Planta Tower is central at the bottom. The broken lines denote the course of the moat (ditch P304); this certainly postdates the round mortar mixers belonging to the construction period of the tower. A palisade was located between the moat and the Planta Tower (ditch P451). An enclosed courtyard with a cistern and a former flight of stairs lie east of the Planta Tower (courtyard P339) (Image: Boschetti-Maradi 2005).

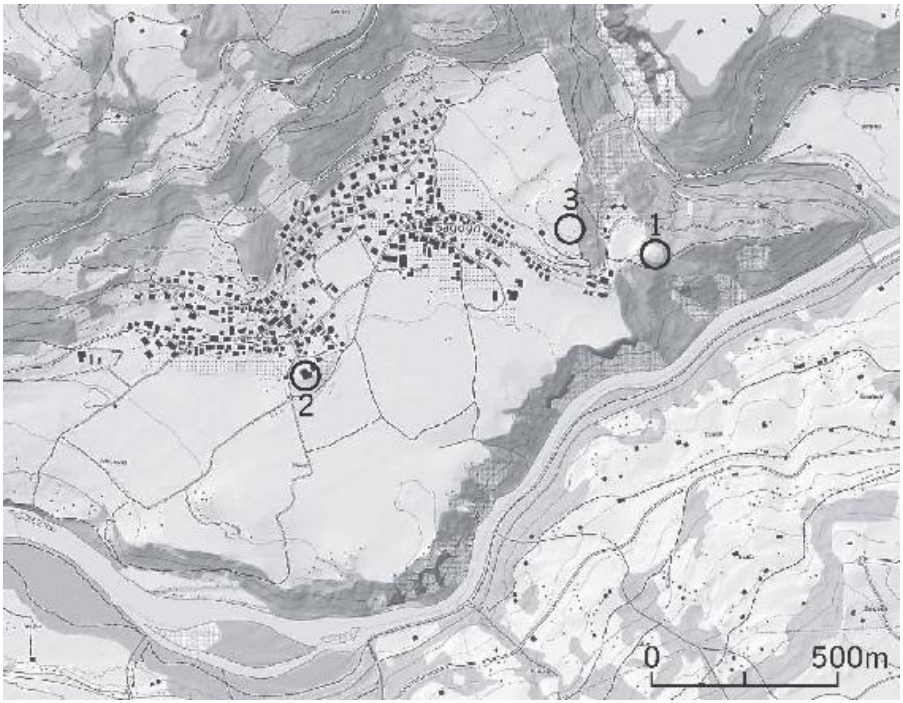

Figure 10.9. Sagogn (Grisons). 1 Schiedberg castle ruins, earliest phase of construction from the 4th/5th centuries, curtain wall and fortified tower of the 12th century. 2 Parish church of St. Mary, earliest building, 5th/6th centuries. 3 Bregl da Haida, former church of St. Columbanus, 6th/7th centuries, curtain wall, 9th century or later.

Refuges and hilltop fortifications

Many monasteries will necessarily have had to be evacuated in times of danger. One well documented episode relates to the St. Gall Abbey during a Hungarian attack on 1st May 926. Both the St. Gall monk Ekkehard I in his *Vita sanctae Wiboradae* (composed *c*. 960/70) and, a century later, Ekkehard IV, in his *Casus sancti Galli*, left remarkable accounts of this raid (*Eccardus Sangallensis*, ed. Haefele 1980, 114–117 and 136f). The anchoress Wiborada warned the monks of the impending Hungarian raid, prompting them to take the aged and the students to safety on the Wasserburg Peninsula on Lake Constance and to carry the library holdings to the island monastery of Reichenau; the monks themselves sought refuge on a peninsula in the River Sitter. While the monastery of St. Gall escaped relatively unscathed, the martyr Wiborada, who had remained in her cell, was slain (Duft and Missura-Sipos 1992, 22f). Ekkehard IV recounts the construction of the monks' refuge thus:

> ‘A location was chosen near the River Sitter, suitable for the construction of a castle as though it had been preordained by God […] The site was fortified at its narrowest access point by building a rampart and *abatis* [a palisade of thorns and branches] and a mighty fort was built befitting the Holy Trinity. All the materials required were quickly amassed. This was not mentioned by the author of the *Vita Wiboradae*; we have received the information from some of the brothers who knew about it and we have briefly added it. A hastily erected chapel became the house of prayer; the crosses and the containers with the lists of the dead, as well as almost the entire church treasure, except for the library books, were all taken there.’

Since the 1970s the refuge (yet to be excavated) has been identified as the Waldburg site near Häggenschwil, 6 km north of the abbey (Fig. 10.11). This is a naturally protected promontory with a surface area of *c*. 140 × 150 m surrounded by the River Sitter on three sides; the hastily-erected artificial defences described by Ekkehard IV will have guarded the northern access point and the promontory’s southern edge (Schwarz 1975, 404 with Appendix 40, 6).

Gersbach (1966) believed that it was possible, based on the example of the Bürkli compound near Möhlin in Canton Aargau, to identify criteria characteristic of 10th-century bank and ditch enclosures. The Bürkli site occupies a hill overlooking the River Rhine, fortified on its main front by high ramparts (Fig. 10.12); much like an upper ward, the promontory was further separated by a ditch. According to Gersbach, the most typical elements are not only the height of the main rampart but also the smaller ramparts running parallel to the access routes. Although no chronologically significant finds were retrieved, this lack of finds was seen to argue against a prehistoric or Roman date and to point instead to a medieval complex. A rare example of a high medieval earthwork dated by its finds is the Hasenburg site near Ins in the Bernese Seeland. This site also has ramparts running parallel to its access routes (Von Kaenel 1980; Schulze-Dörrlamm 1992, 120).

Recovery of a Hungarian arrowhead at Gross Chastel near Lostorf in Canton Solothurn might suggest that earlier defences had been reactivated here. The site had been fortified to act as a refuge in the 3rd century AD and its re-use in the 10th century probably was only short-lived (Matt 1980) (cf. Fig. 10.4). The same perhaps applies to the Runder Berg site near Urach, one of only a few early and high medieval hilltop settlements that have been archaeologically

investigated in detail. The exceptionally well protected knoll on the edge of the Swabian Jura in Germany was first fortified in the late 3rd or 4th century with rampart reinforced with wooden stakes. The rampart was later razed and not replaced, although the site continued to be settled. In the late 9th or 10th century a new fortification was erected which consisted of a 3.0 m thick dry-stone wall running along the edge of the slope. Finds retrieved from here included Hungarian arrowheads and a fragment of a bridle bit (Koch 1991).

In sum, most of the archaeologically examined hilltop settlements in northern Switzerland do not appear to have been fortified until the late 9th or 10th century (Müller and Windler 1985; Bauer 1991, 284f; cf. Ettel 2014). As of yet, the archaeology has concentrated on the defensive arrangements and the numbers of sites which have seen their interiors investigated are limited; but the presence in these of traces internal timber-built structures and related settlement finds recommends much more analysis to understand the sites' occupants and internal chronologies (Schneider and Meyer 1991).

Town and city walls

In Late Antiquity, from AD 260 until the 5th century, new walls were built around towns and cities. The Early Middle Ages up to the time of Charlemagne were a period during which few new defences were constructed (Ward-Perkins 1984, 191–199; Pani Ermini 1993–94; Brogiolo and Gelichi 1998, 68–74). In terms of urban defence in our study period, according to the scant written sources the ancient walls of the episcopal cities were the first to be renewed in the Frankish Empire. The circuit of the Roman *castra* in Arras and Cambrai were restored in around 890 and monasteries in their immediate proximity were incorporated into the new defences. Comparable is Regensburg where the monastery of St. Emmeram, which was located outside the gates of the former legionary camp *Castra Regina*, was included in the revised circuit. This is one of only a few early Roman to medieval urban fortifications which have been archaeologically examined: the Roman walls appear to have remained intact up to the 8th century; subsequently, perhaps in the 9th century, a moat was created and later, from *c*. 920, new defences were erected around both the ancient *castrum* and the St. Emmeram monastery (Boos *et al*. 1995, 37–39).

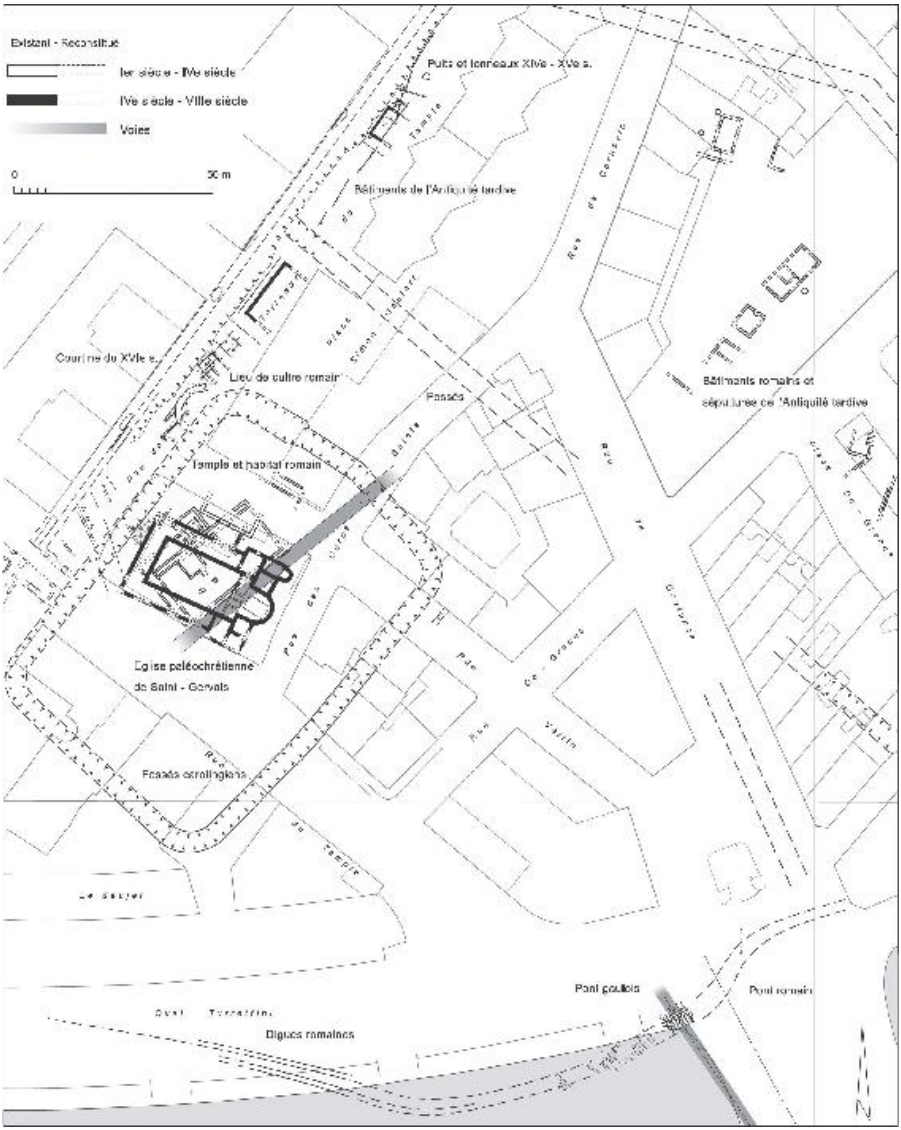

Figure 10.10. Geneva, church of Saint-Gervais. Carolingian-period ditch system encircling the church (Image by Archaeology Department of Canton Geneva).

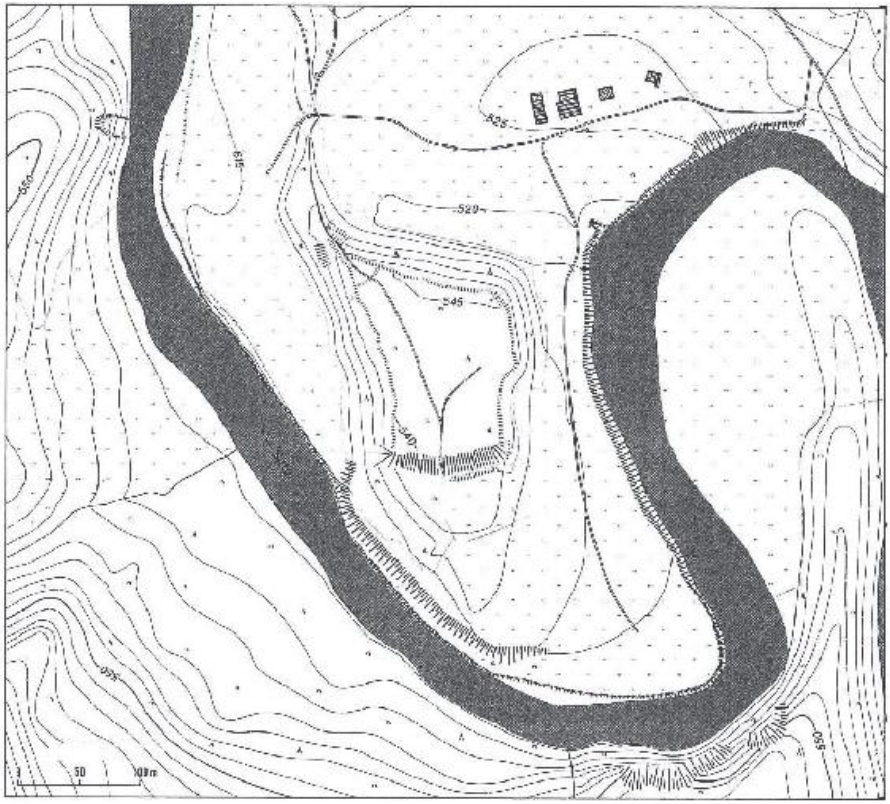

Figure 10.11. Häggenschwil (Canton St. Gallen), Waldburg. Probable refuge for the Abbey of St. Gall from 926 (Image from Schwarz 1975).

Only a few urban seats in what is today Switzerland were fortified in the Early Middle Ages. But these were nearly all late antique period complexes, enclosed in the late 3rd and 4th centuries AD by massive curtain walls. They included episcopal cities (*e.g.* Geneva and Chur) and other central places (*e.g.* Zurich and Solothurn) as well as a number of settlements which became depopulated completely during the Early Middle Ages (*e.g.* Irgenhausen, Pfyn). According to written records, the oldest medieval city fortifications in Switzerland are those of the monastic city of St. Gall: Ekkehard IV mentioned that the *urbs* of St. Gall was fortified between 953 and 975 by means of a bank and ditch system plus 13 towers and gates. These defences probably preceded the later city wall. The first medieval fortification of the episcopal city of Constance should date from roughly the same period (Heiligmann and Röber 2009). It was not until the second half of the 11th century that the monastic cities of Zurich and Schaffhausen as well as the episcopal cities of Basel and Avenches were fortified with

ramparts and curtain walls (Duft 1957, 50; Bänteli 1994; Auberson and Sarott 1995; Matt and Rentzel 2003; Wild and Motschi 2004).

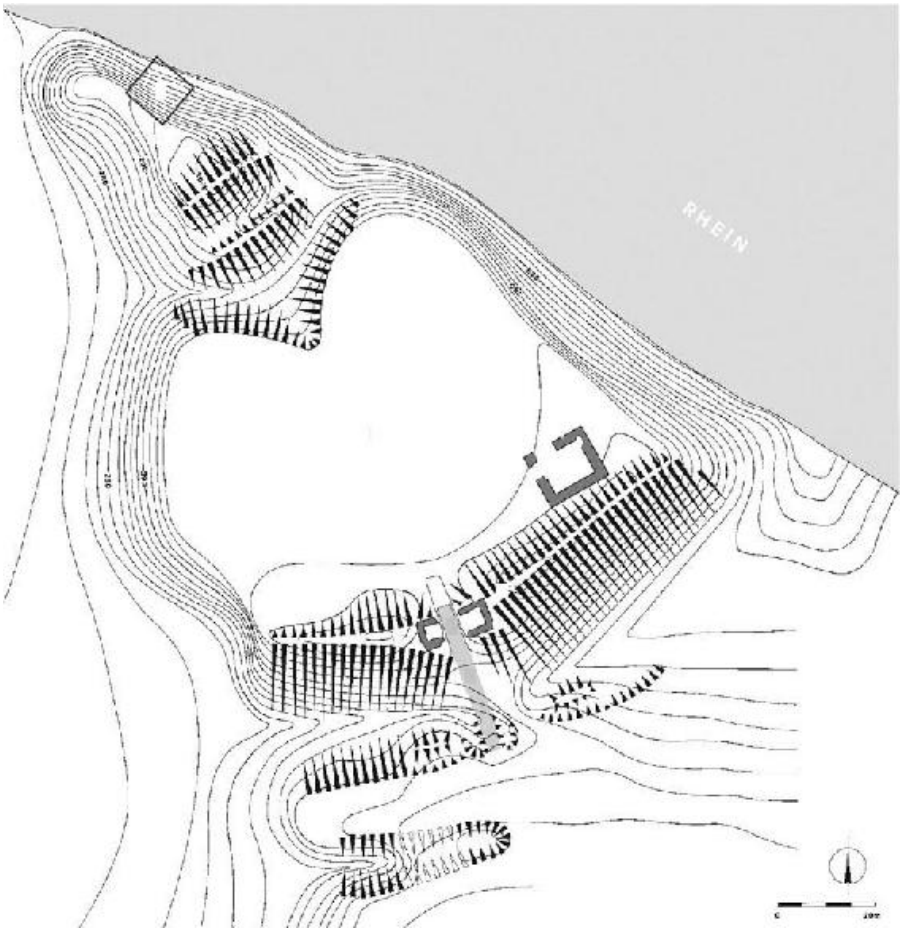

Figure 10.12. Möhlin (Canton Aargau), Bürkli. Bank and ditch system probably dating from the 10th century (Image by Archaeology Department of Canton Aargau).

Conclusions

From an archaeological viewpoint, the 9th and 10th centuries in central and southern Europe are a phase of economic stagnation and reduced innovation. However, after a prolonged period without any new fortifications being built throughout the former Roman Empire, new defences began to be constructed from the 9th century onwards. This intensive building activity was prompted mainly by attacks on unfortified monasteries and settlements. It comprised all the essential architectural components of what would later become the classic aristocratic castles and city fortifications, including bank and ditch

systems, curtain walls and fortified towers as well as the choice of elevated locations for building fortifications.

Constructed between 958 and 961, the Planta Tower in Müstair in Canton Grisons can, in architectural typological terms, be considered the prototype of an aristocratic castle (cf. Figs 10.7 and 10.8). A fortified residential tower with an elevated entrance and an associated courtyard with a cistern, the small compound was protected by a palisaded bank and ditch system. The so-called Museum Tower in Avenches, built by the Bishop of Lausanne between 1056 and 1089 over the ruins of a Roman amphitheatre, is another, if later example (Auberson and Sarott 1995). These towers were not knights' castles but edifices erected by bishops; they not only fulfilled defensive purposes but also served as the centres of power for the bishops, thereby intensifying their secular authority.

Figure 10.13. Charavines (Savoy F), Colletières on Lake Paladru. Layout plan of the settlement between AD 1006 and 1034 (Image from Colardelle and Verdel 1993).

Furthermore, those fortifications built by members of the aristocracy were not constructed for defensive purposes alone but were primarily linked with the formation of a new manorial system. The earliest manorial centres were largely unfortified manors, some of which have been identified archaeologically. In Colletières near Charavines on Lake Paladru in Savoy a small settlement complex

consisting of three timber-built houses was erected and extended between 1006 and 1034. The houses stood on the shore of the lake and were surrounded by nothing more than a palisade (Fig. 10.13), yet the finds here clearly attest to the elevated social standing of the occupants (Colardelle and Verdel 1993, 289–305). Thanks to archaeological excavations carried out in Unterregenbach near Schwäbisch Hall in Germany, at Bümpliz Castle near Bern and on Schiedberg hill in Sagogn in Canton Grisons (Fig. 10.9) it is possible to tentatively track the development from manors (*curtes*) to fortified castles in these locations (Fehring 1972, 118–128 and 146–148; Meyer 1977; Meyer and Strübin Rindisbacher 2002). From the 11th century onwards, castle complexes with towers and differentiated residential buildings began to be constructed throughout central and western Europe. The *Zürcher Predigten* (the Zurich sermons), dating to *c*. AD 1200, describe a castle thus: 'A castle is a place where a tower stands surrounded by a wall, where the two protect each other' (trans. Wackernagel 1876, 21). At that stage castles were no longer being built solely by the high nobility but also by knights to use as their places of residence.

Thus emerges a picture of the early development of fortified buildings being erected by royals, bishops, abbots and subsequently by nobles, and this is mirrored in Jaeger's hypothesis (1985) which places the origins of courtliness with the domestic clerics of the 10th century. So-called *Edelfreie* (free nobles) and later knights adopted this culture and it became the first lay culture of the Middle Ages. The class consciousness of the nobility evolved in tandem with the architectural development. The use of fortified architectural components thus became an integral part of courtly culture and an indicator of one's social standing.

Next Steps

Reliable and accurate dates are indispensable for putting buildings, sequences and finds into relevant historical contexts. The archaeological, architectural and historical investigation of the Planta Tower at Müstair Abbey is one outstanding example of a new discovery that was as surprising as it was groundbreaking. Tracing the development and typology of early fortifications will require much additional data and analysis from various sites.

Between the 1960s and 1980s a relatively large number of castles throughout Switzerland were systematically investigated by archaeological means for research targets. Unless prompted by external circumstances, however, the archaeological services nowadays no longer carry out such investigations but generally become active only when rescue excavations or restorations are deemed necessary. However, ramparts, particularly those visible in the landscape, have rarely been threatened by construction projects over the past number of decades because they are generally located outside of settlement areas. This means that study of such sites will remain static unless developed research projects occur.

Systematic surveys based on scientific research questions, combined perhaps with exploratory excavations, should help yield finds to provide chronological evidence. However, settlements dating from the 8th to 10th centuries generally yield very few chronologically relevant finds, including pottery, making full interpretation problematic. The period between the cessation of provision of grave goods in the second half of the 7th century and the 12th century south of the Rhine in what is today Switzerland and the Jura region is indeed overall characterised by an extreme dearth of finds. And the lack of medieval finds of the 10th–12th centuries is not just simply a reflection of limited research; indeed, archaeologists in Switzerland are currently studying this phenomenon in detail (*SPM* VII 2014). In light of these material cultural deficiencies, it will be crucial to seek samples from stratified contexts, notably ramparts, for radiocarbon dating to clarify the chronology of these important fortified Alpine sites.

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Part III

Western Europe

11

Anxious Abbots? Questions of Monastic Security and Insecurity in Early Medieval Europe

Neil Christie & Richard Hodges

> 'The punishment that has been inflicted on your monastery must serve your eternal salvation. You have a stronger defence in the mending of your conduct and the intercession of the saints who rest among you than in the massing of arrows and the gathering of arms…'
>
> (Alcuin, *Letter to Higbald, bishop of Lindisfarne*, on how to respond to the Viking assault of AD 793 on the undefended monastery: Letter 27 in Allott 1974, 38)[1]

Introduction

Monasteries continue to take a prominent place in discussions of early medieval religion, politics, landscapes and artistic heritage, but they are often looked at primarily as spiritual foci, cultural beacons and points of investment, leaving questions of their structural configuration and their physical settings too frequently ignored or side-lined. Archaeologists have done much to focus on the architecture of these sites, from early plans to later transformations, although the emphasis remains rooted on the main church complex and far less attention has gone to the array of ancillary and functional built units (kitchens, sleeping quarters, workshops, barns) that gathered around or close to the church (cf. Loveluck 2005, 247). Some exceptions exist, of course, with more expansive archaeological investigations at sites like Jarrow, Hartlepool, San Vincenzo and Müstair enabling discussion

of precinct activities, storage, industrial outputs and monastic material cultures. But even in these the precinct or enclosure is rarely considered despite being a seemingly fundamental component to the monastic plan and concept.

From the late 8th to the 10th century, in the wider context of Viking raiding and progressive fracturing of the Carolingian state, and with raids from Arabs in the south, Slavs from the east and Hungars from the north, many monasteries were threatened or even sacked and their communities disrupted or displaced. Did this documented period of upheaval signal a change in the character of these sites? Alongside the growth of fortified civilian sites, do monasteries become defended or their enclosures reinforced? Do these sites reflect the secular world in terms of its perceived insecurity and instability? Or did monasteries 'ride out' these storms without recourse to walls?

This paper first looks back to the prominent phase of monastic foundation and growth in 6th- and 7th-century Europe and assesses the question of precincts, enclosures and location then, before addressing in broad terms what changes can be discerned for the period *c*. AD 775–950. We will sketch examples from Ireland, England, France, Switzerland and Italy and, in a final section, offer fuller commentary on the specific case study of San Vincenzo al Volturno in central Italy, where long-term excavations provide substantial and relevant data on evolving monastic security – albeit perhaps out of line with responses in northern Europe.

Rules and Precincts

Dey has interrogated the 6th-century Rules (of the Master and of Benedict) to determine whether monasteries of the period were defined by precincts and walls: he argues that terms such as '*claustra*', signifying 'confines', and references to gates (2004, 362–363), point firmly in the direction of monasteries as 'walled entities', meaning that the monks were 'beings definitively sundered from the world as a whole' (ibid., 366, 370–371). But he recognises the (currently) minimal physical evidence for these perimeters, which might have been rather nominal fenced enclosures, not necessarily stone walls; in part this reflects the character of some of these early complexes, being 'decentralised' and of 'looser agglomerations', in contrast with the 'integrated' and ordered complexes or 'compounds' of the Carolingian

period (ibid., 368–369. Cf. Sennhauser 1996, 196–197). By implication the 8th- and 9th-century complexes are more prominently defined by precincts, but does this mean these were defensive? And is this supposition supported by archaeology? Below we explore these ideas and show that a varied picture of definition of monastic space emerges, in which defence rarely appears as a required feature until the 10th century, or even later. Was this variation dependent on location, scale, patronage or fortune?

One needs stress also that, while Dey highlights two known Rules (whose circulation even in their own day was probably limited), in the earliest centuries of monasticism, very simply, no general plan or formula existed for monastic settlements and a variety of monastic 'rules' or manuals for behaviour, order, work and prayer existed (Biarne 1997; Diem 2011; and papers in Part II of Dey and Fentress 2011, esp. Bowes 2011). The Rule of Saint Benedict (summarised in Lawrence 1984, 20–28), generated at Monte Cassino in the 520s/530s, gained only slow currency, even if likely advertised strongly by Pope Gregory the Great in the late 6th century. However, monasticism was far less prominent in Italy than in Frankish Gaul; only from the early 8th century did Lombard kings and elites found monasteries at pace. Key changes were stimulated in *Francia*, where, across the 8th century, several attempts were made to reform monastic rules: councils were organised in the 740s by Boniface, with the aim of bringing monks and nuns under one Rule (De Jong 1995, 620); these debates led to a profound movement to confine monks to a life of prayer.

Charlemagne's court was a great proponent of Benedict of Aniane's reforms, which were widely adopted and eventually ratified by the councils overseen by Louis the Pious in AD 816 and 817 (McKitterick 1983; Lawrence 1984, 68–73). These rules led to the creation of the monastic plan to be found in the schematic blueprint of a monastery for St. Gall (*c*. 830) (Horn and Born 1979; Sullivan 1998) and thereafter present in the customs and organisation of later, Romanesque monasteries.

However, monasteries peaked in the period prior to this and in the changing world of the 9th and 10th centuries, scope to develop monasticism in the proposed orderly fashion was limited, and archaeology has much to do to trace the adaptation of sites. Where

new monasteries are founded, however, notably in the 10th century, they conformed to something some way from Saint Benedict's model, often overseen by bishops, attached to royal towns and palaces, or set within lordly fortified complexes.

Early Medieval Monastic Seats: Locations and Enclosures

In north-west Europe and in territories such as northern Italy, multiple monastic creations arose in the 6th and 7th centuries – a period widely viewed by both historians and archaeologists as 'insecure', with warring dynasties and conflicting states and with burial communities frequently marked out by male 'weapon graves'. While most urban centres were defended with late Roman urban circuits in varied states of repair, and while archaeology points to a fairly widespread rural 'retreat' to hilltops, it is striking that monks did not themselves generally resort to high security locales. Some monasteries, male and female alike, in Frankish Gaul especially might be sited in or adjacent to defended urban communities, but just as frequently they occupied rural seats (sometimes alongside royal vills), on main roads, and with fair hinterlands in economic support (Verhaeghe 2005, 267). In some instances sites might be deemed 'remote' or more 'secure', but it would be erroneous to see many as 'defensive' in outlook, setting or form (Sennhauser 1996, 203–204). In Gaul, as perhaps in Middle Anglo-Saxon England, the proximity of monastery to royal centre might have had the advantage of defenders on hand if a threat arose – the monastery in return providing the spiritual support to that royalty (see Turner *et al.* 2013, 106, 109–111 discussing 7th-century Northumbria and Jarrow).

Occasionally there are claims of monastic sites placed in 'strategic' locations, such as stated for Bobbio, founded by Irish monks on lands donated by the Lombard king Agilulf in 613, in the frontier wedge between Lombard lands and Byzantine coastal Liguria in north-west Italy (Cantino Wataghin 1989, 82–83; Destefanis 2002, 28–29). But no archaeology points to any military role to the site, nor, currently, to stations of Lombard military in the vicinity; and Bobbio, undoubtedly a compact community, did not physically block a road. Arguably one might view this foundation as a point of spiritual contact between

Byzantines and Lombards – if with some economic role, namely to access pilgrim and other traffic over the Alps and Appennines, being sited on or near a set of routeways, including the Trebbia valley (ibid., 10, 100–101). Such traffic probably played a part in the next phases of Lombard monastic foundation from the later 7th century, such as along the *via Francigena* (Corsi and De Minicis 2012 for Tuscany/ Lazio), although whether this is 'strategic' (stated again by Cantino Wataghin 1989, 83–84) or simply a reflection on where elites held lands and chose to found monastic seats, needs discussion (On 'open access' sites: Christie 2006, 173–174).

Understandably, the temptation of earlier scholars has been to focus on the residual traces of early medieval church and cloister, on scattered or reused sculptural liturgical fittings, and on related monastic products – manuscripts, land charters and saintly abbatial doings. Very rarely is the enclosure or precinct pinpointed and interrogated via archaeology (As for Bobbio, where references to entrance ways and the site's bounds occur in contemporary abbots' *Vitae* – '*septa monastirii densat*': Destefanis 2002, 35–36. Cantino Wataghin 1989, 92–94, noting virtually no data for the form of Lombard-period monastic precincts; cf. Dey 2004, 369; James 1981, 40–41 on *septa* or 'hedges'). Often, of course, there has been rebuilding, expansion or modern build-up around sites that endured into the Middle Ages and beyond, meaning that, without extensive excavation, any first phase enclosure will be hard to trace – and even when sizeable excavations do occur, as for Müstair, secure proof may be lacking (Sennhauser 1996, 198, 205; Sennhauser and Courvoisier 1996, 18, 42, noting the curtain wall of *c*. 1300 likely following a Romanesque precursor). Frequently, therefore, we can cite little more than such-and-such site was positioned in this location and might have utilised a hill slope, a watercourse or an island setting to help define and perhaps defend its monastic structures and community. Rare are cases such as San Sebastiano in south Lazio, Italy, a compact monastery founded by the patrician Liberius in the 530s and visited by Saint Benedict himself and still featuring fabric of the earliest phase (Fentress *et al*. 2005; but see critique by Hodges 2007). The monastery sat high on a hillslope but was in full view of the nearby town of Alatri; its position was chiefly geared to exploit a Roman aqueduct. Scrutiny of the monastery's standing archaeology reveals

how the complex slowly evolved largely within the bounds of the first foundation, but suggests that its northern enclosing wall was more terrace and revetment than anything defensive (ibid, 350. The authors reference abbot Theodosius appealing to Pope Gregory I for troops to defend the site, but confuse this with an earlier tradition of Goths attacking in the 540s – ibid, 269 with notes 60–61).

Some sites certainly held defensive *potential*: in Britain, island sites like Lindisfarne, for example, although even with the tide covering the causeway, boats could easily land on the island, whose circumference was never fortified (O'Sullivan and Young 1995, 18–23); Hartlepool's headland setting which could be isolated by ditches or ramparts (Daniels 2007, 169–170); or Breedon-on-the-Hill (Leicestershire) within an elevated, former Iron Age hillfort (Dornier 1977) – although its Mercian monastic community could never have been large enough to 'man' the eroded ramparts if attacked. But defence was never a prime concern at these sites: firstly, location was one of at least partial physical separation in terms of detachment from the secular world, if not necessarily distant from it – Lindisfarne's tidal island ('tombolo') was in visible range of the royal fortress at Bamburgh, and Jarrow lay only a few kilometres from the royal vill at the old Roman fort of South Shields, for example – and most of these high-flying monasteries were planted on royal properties and given further royal lands to support them (O'Sullivan and Young 1995, 34–42; Turner *et al.* 2013, 110–111). Secondly, these were never 'cut off': the attested regular journeying of kings, bishops, elites, pilgrims and ordinary folk to visit their shrines or workshops reflects a free-flow of traffic, even if this must have been contained in some fashion (ibid, 113). Thirdly, the locations were generally prominent and visible as opposed to hidden – an island site, a detached promontory, an elevated hill, a rise overlooking a main river; indeed, the bells for services, the chants, smoke from workshops, the bustle of workers in cultivation spaces, the siting of stone crosses, etc. hardly obscured these important sites from the world around. Fourthly, such locations could reinforce a mental idea of religious focussing: a hilltop puts a community closer to God while an island puts Nature all around – a north-west European equivalent to the monastic 'desert' (cf. O'Loughlin 1997; O'Sullivan 2001, 36–38; Blair 2005, 191–193 for minsters in Anglo-Saxon England).

Yet efforts to reinforce detachment are evident in provision for some of sites with fixed and often prominent boundaries. For Hartlepool, mid-7th-century *Heruteu*, the ridge-top of the headland hosted the main monastic complex, making it already visible from distance; the scattered and compact excavations have enabled recognition of a ditched boundary following the 40 ft contour, defining a principal area of *c*. 400 × 100 m; internal boundaries (some with palisades or upright posts) and fences demarcated male, female, burial and work zones at least (Daniels 2007, 157–162) (Fig. 11.1). Daniels views the main and internal boundaries as part of a planned whole, datable to the arrival of St Hild in *c*. AD 650; C14 dates from the 'internal boundary complex' give good support to this date (ibid, 162, 213–216; pers. comm.). There may also have been an outer enclosure to the north west, delimited by a NE–SW ditch (so far untraced but implied by the parish boundary), which 'effectively marks off the higher ground of the headland', while also placing a pre-Christian sacred well (St Helen's Well) inside the monastic bounds (ibid., 169–170, 172. For northern neighbours Wearmouth and Jarrow, both riverine spur sites, recent geophysical and auger/borehole surveys were impeded by the massive dumps of ballast made in the early modern period to raise the ground: Turner *et al*. 2013, 111–138, suggesting, however, the locations of cross fragments at Jarrow as possible markers to entrances *c*. 60–70 m south west and south east of the church).

Whereas on promontories or headlands a ditch reinforced the division of monastic space from the mainland, in other, more 'open' settings monastic detachment may have been secured by a *vallum*. The provision of a *vallum monasterii* – a bank and ditch enclosure – is attested both in textual sources such as Adomnan's *Life of Columba* for some early monastic seats in Scotland (I.3, II.29) and through archaeology, standing remains or from cartographic/topographic evidence, such as for various sites in Ireland. In Argyll, the famous monastery of Iona lay within a D-shaped enclosure of *c*. 400 × 250 m (*c*. 8 hectares), whose banks and ditch are part extant as earthworks (and further traced and sampled by geophysical survey and trenching); the enclosure's east flank was likely formed by the scarp of the raised beach (Fig. 11.2). The ditch may have been in places about 4.0 m wide and 2.0 m deep, in places rock-cut; the rampart, *c*. 4.0 m

wide, and with rubble stone base, may have featured a palisade – both not inconsiderable feats of engineering and signifying a notable investment in man-hours. A C14 sample from peat in the ditch by the southern causeway gave a late 6th- to late 8th-century AD date range; the ditch here replaced a rearward and narrower, rather meandering ditch, which might be contemporary with Columba's foundation (Ritchie 1997, 36–40; on crosses at the *vallum* and entrances, 69). Lindisfarne, founded by Aidan in AD 635 as a daughter post of Iona, surely replicated the Iona *vallum*, although the modern township has largely obscured its traces (O'Sullivan and Young 1995, 40–42; recent geophysical input by Durham University offers new data: Petts 2013, 303–305). Some Columban-period sites had only nominal ditched zones: thus at Portmahomack in north-east Scotland, the ditches were primarily designed to catch hill-water; here in fact the 'outer' ditch was cut after the inner one was filled in, after *c*. AD 650; no rampart was evident (Carver 2008, 51, 119).

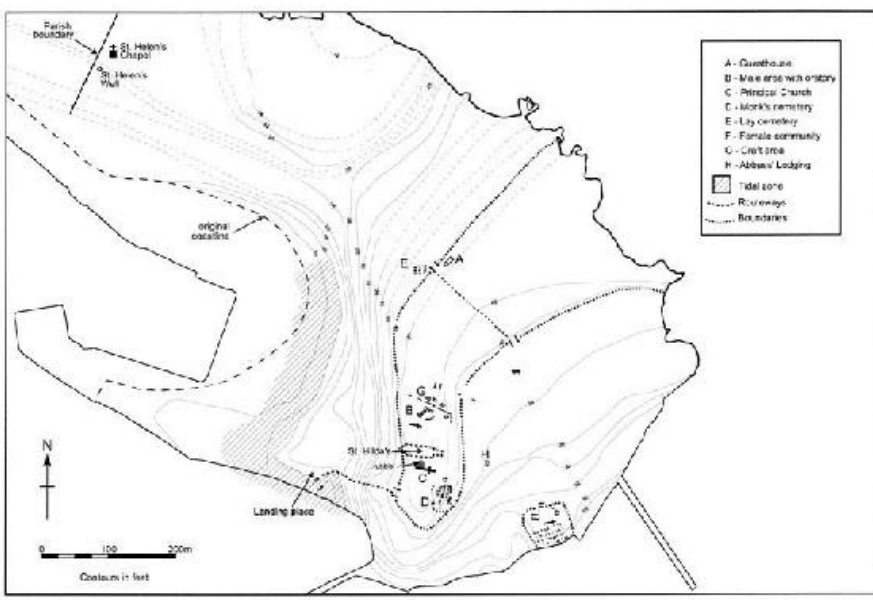

Figure 11.1. Plan of excavations and identified Middle Saxon monastic features at Hartlepool (Image courtesy of Tees Archaeology).

Irish monks were central to establishing Christian monastic bastions in a still wayward northern England and in Scotland. Such efforts were in part akin to military campaigning and so we might expect an element of defensibility. In Ireland itself, monastic sites,

large and small, could hold riverine, spur, promontory, island or hill locations; they might be set on boundaries or borders between kingdoms; and they might exploit or else cancel out pre-Christian sites. Many feature enclosures, usually curvilinear, sometimes with both inner and outer enclosures; however, their inspiration and chronology are still unclear (Edwards 1990, 104–112, citing examples such as Armagh, Clonmacnoise and Nendrum. Updated review in O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013, 145–148, plus 354–360 tabulating excavated data and available C14 dates, pointing, generally, to enclosures of 6th- to 8th-century date). Were they consciously imitating secular ring-forts, perhaps with secular patrons providing work forces? Might the enclosures even respond to secular norms in terms of internal divisions of space, such as defining the prime focus (church), the work areas, livestock spaces and burial zone, and also ordering entry by visitors? But were enclosures primary features or did they arise in wake of conflict between kingdoms and patrons? Edwards notes that, potentially, enclosures only begin in the 7th century 'when the concept of areas of sanctuary is first attested' (1990, 106. O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013, 145, 148 make a connection between extant texts such as the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* and Admonan's *De Locis Sanctis* of the later 7th and 8th century). Clearly we need also to question when secular and royal sites began to erect enclosures: recent scientific dating work shows, for example, univallate raths as dominant from AD 600–800, whereas multivallate ones may commence slightly earlier, in the 6th century (ibid., 64–70; on rath occupants and status, 82–84; see also O'Sullivan, this volume).

Figure 11.2. Iona: aerial view looking south showing line of the monastic vallum's north and western courses (Image © RCAHMS (Aerial Photography Collection). Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk).

Are there comparable markers of monastic space outside the Irish sphere in the south and east of (Anglo-Saxon) England? In fact, the Augustinian-period mission sites and successive bases – a mix of monastic and episcopal foundations – reveal a fascinating mix of defining spaces: most prominent perhaps is the reuse of Saxon Shore forts, such as Burgh Castle and Caister-on-Sea, with thick, turreted stone walls forming powerful monastic enceintes; alternatively, Iron Age earthworks were 're-commissioned', as presumed at Burgh (Suffolk) or else 'natural enclosures' were adopted, such as the river spur of Iken, site of St Botolph's mid-7th-century minster of *Icanho* (Hoggett 2010, 52–77, noting that 'Nationwide, more than 46 early ecclesiastical sites... are associated with Roman forts or enclosures', 55). Interestingly, while it is undoubtedly correct to see such adoption of Roman enclosures as a conscious strategy to connect symbolically and physically the incoming Church with the authority of past *romanitas* (Bell 2005), Hoggett, as others, argues that 'These enclosures were not used for defensive purposes – indeed, many would not have been defensible by the 7th century' (2010, 55). This

view is debatable: after all, Gregory the Great and (Saint) Augustine both recognised the struggles to be faced against pagan Anglo-Saxons; conversion was often cited as a military-like campaign; and the entries of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles make plain the volatile 'political' landscape of the island, with military conflicts the bread and butter of the evolving 6th-century kingdoms. Walls and enclosures, even if patched up, surely played both symbolic and physical roles – protecting the faith.

For the minsters that followed the first wave of conversion in the second half of the 7th century, similar patterns of separation were sought, although often we see attachments of minsters/ monasteries to royal vills or else as replacements (Blair 2005, 191–193. A later example is St Albans and Offa's rural palace of Kingsbury in the 790s: Slater 1998, 160–163). Exciting excavations at Lyminge, Kent, are revealing the context of the later 7th-century royal double monastery, set on a low promontory away from the royal site; no trace of a *vallum* has yet been recognised, although internal planned and fenced zones are known (Thomas 2013, 128–131). Potentially, nearby royal households may have countered the need to delimit these religious sites with the big *valla* of Ireland and the north. Where enclosure lines can be traced, often inferred from residual features or boundary lines in modern town and village plans, as at Wimborne, Dorset, and Lambourn, Berkshire (Foot 2006, 104–107), virtually no archaeology is available to date any of these enclosures, which might be primary, later 7th-century features, but might equally denote 9th-century modifications – the 'strong and lofty walls' claimed at Wimborne are cited only from the 840s by Rudolf of Fulda, Germany (see Costen 2011, 185–198 on minsters and monasteries in Anglo-Saxon Somerset).

In Frankish Gaul, many monasteries lay in suburban space, including St Martin's monastery at Tours, west of the fortified 4th-century enceinte, Radegunda's nunnery of the 560s on the outskirts of defended Poitiers and the St-Vaast abbey across the river from Roman Arras (Galinié 1988; Verhaeghe 2005, 267; James 1981, 38–39 highlights the likely reuse of a Roman defended enclosure for Jumièges, founded *c*. 655, and pp 40–41 documented walls at nunneries such as Faremoutiers). And in the turbulent latter 6th century, as the chronicle of Gregory of Tours highlights, these abbeys

and nunneries were often bones of contention between kings, abbots, abbesses, dukes and bishops, with the community at Poitiers seemingly very volatile (Gregory, IX.39–43, X.15–17, documenting rebellions by many of the nuns). The same might be said for some monasteries in Ireland, where secular bonds were close, which meant conflicts between power groups might entail monastic injuries – as indeed attested across the 8th century, such as in 764 between Clonmacnoise and Durrow and in 793 when Armagh monastery was plundered by forces from the Uì Chremthainn clan (Ritchie 1997, 95–96, noting also raids by farmers prompted by famine and by cattle plagues in the 770s). But proximity to a royal house could also be hugely beneficial: one special Frankish example is the shrine of Saint-Denis, established *c*. AD 500 in a cemetery of a (defended?) *vicus* 9 km north of Paris and transformed into an abbey in the 630s by king Dagobert; in becoming a dynastic burial centre it saw expanded Merovingian and Carolingian patronage and yet it seems to remain undefended across the 7th and 8th centuries (Loveluck 2005, 245–246). In the case of St Riquier at Centula in northern France in the latter 8th century, over a hundred soldiers with horse were based in the adjoining *vicus militum* (Sennhauser 1996, 204).

But some Frankish monastic sites or mission churches lay in frontier zones and we may see in these a higher coincidence with defended enclosures: for the earlier 8th century, Fehring (1991, 95) cites near Heidelberg the *castrum*-hillfort of Aberinesburg with its monastery of St Michael and the Odilienberg hillfort in Alsace, where Duke Eticho founded a monastery in the 720s. Other sites were controlled by bishops or housed bishops – *e.g.* Würzberg and Büraburg (though new work suggests the stone curtain may be of *c*. AD 900: Henning and Macphail 2004). However, the contrast here is that these were religious sites founded within *existing* defences and as part of wider settlement units, and thus in contrast with the 'independent' monastic sites of deeper heritage which this paper is focussing on.

Monasteries under Threat: 9th- and 10th-Century Attacks

Richards (1991, 97) recounts dramatic losses and damages inflicted on monasteries across England in the Viking period: 'In Northumbria the

exposed coastal sites at Tynemouth, Hartlepool, Whitby, Monkwearmouth, Jarrow and Lindisfarne all appear to have been largely abandoned in the 9th century… Hexham and Whithorn ceased to function as bishoprics… Exposed Kentish monasteries also disappear from the record, including Reculver, Dover and Folkestone'. But Richards does, sensibly, spread the blame: some losses come before documented Viking raids; some may have been strategic withdrawals of communities; some perhaps failed due to lost aristocratic support; and some lesser sites were just bad sites (cf. Daniels 2007, 169 on Hartlepool's demise, lacking destruction deposits). In central and southern England, the picture is patchy, with some level of continuity, but also with losses and some later re-foundations of sites – such as Abingdon and Chertsey (Booth *et al.* 2007, 258–259, 399). One historically-prominent site is Athelney island in the Somerset levels, Alfred the Great's hiding place during the 870s Danish incursions and seat of a 'formidable fortress of elegant work manship' protecting the causeway across the 'impassable' marshland. In 893, as a thanks-offering, Alfred founded a monastery on the (former) island – thus a royal creation, close to a royal defended site (Richardson 2003, 3–4, citing the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and *Life of King Alfred*).

Some western sites rode the storm(s): the resilience of the Columban community at Iona is shown by the monastery's recovery following losses of possessions but also much loss of life on a number of occasions. Viking raids hit Iona in 795, 798, 802, 806 and 825, with the monastery's fame and reputed material wealth clearly a major pull to opportunistic assailants – with such 'stocks' of prized items no doubt topped up by devout patrons after losses (Ritchie 1997, 91–92, 95 – identifying also a 'strategy of partial withdrawal', with abbots later residing in Irish Kells). Recorded murders of monks and abbots likely came from vain efforts to prevent prized reliquaries being carried off. Such episodes are, effectively, signs of efforts to defend monastery and possessions; there should have been advance warnings (unless these were night raids) and perhaps efforts to block and guard entrance(s) to the enclosure. Whether the monks responded to raids by reinforcing their enclosure cannot be proven, although a 1956 excavation identified a likely (but undated) renewal of the rampart. In north-east Scotland, the destruction level at

Portmahomack, including fractured carved stones, surely records another Viking assault on an exposed site (Carver 2008, 147).

For 9th-century Ireland the availability of increasing numbers of texts, whether annals, hagiographies, laws and charters, bring church/monastic and royal society into slightly clearer focus. For example, joint royal and monastic laws or *cána* across *c*. 750–850 and circuits by kings, abbots and bishops plus holy relics were enacted around their territories to keep and dispense order and to gain dues or taxes; these acts show the elevated status of both monks and royalty (Bitel 1993, 161–166) – a status presumably expressed structurally at their respective seats. Saints' lives, meanwhile, tell us of rituals enacted around the monastic enclosure, on its bounds and at its gates, these spaces being marked out and protected by saints and by stone (or wooden) crosses (ibid., 58–66). In this period we might envisage that the heavenly saints and the earthly abbots had more work to do in protecting their monasteries given the potential of Viking or other raids (Graham 1998, 140), but we await the archaeology and scientific dating to show that this meant reinforcement, repairs or re-working of enclosure banks and ditches. Were new outer enclosures added, for example, to house, albeit temporarily, lay workers, refugees and livestock in times of threat? The Irish annals do provide references to Viking assaults, with monasteries, but also royal sites and ports their focus, but archaeological proof of destructions is very limited – episodes may have been smash-and-grab raids which left a record only in memory and passing chronicles. The site of Clonfad in County Westmeath (Figs 11.3–11.5) was, according to the annals, attacked and its church burnt down in AD 891. The impressive excavations here, revealing a strong metal-working output, notably for hand bells, confirm a lack of occupation after the later 9th century. Noticeable was the deliberate infilling of the inner and outer enclosure ditches (these, the C14 dates suggest, perhaps only cut in the 7th century) in the 8th–9th centuries, certainly well before the AD 891 attack and monastic failure (Stevens and Channing 2012, 120–129; O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013, 148, 356). It is highly unlikely that the Vikings or other assailants did this infilling as they attacked or when leaving; the early infill date could suggest either that the monks moved out earlier and 'de-commissioned' the precinct (though the ongoing metalwork production argues against this) or that the ditch was not so core to the

monastic complex and defence was not part of its role. Indeed, one can note that ditch infilling occurs at other sites at varied times, as at Nendrum and Kilkenny, and may be as much a reflection of monastic replanning (Paul Stevens, pers. comm.; Stevens and Channing 2012, 126, 135 suggesting also that 'political instability and inter-regional rivalry may have led to the downfall of the monastery' (156) as well as stimulating the first enclosing of Clonfad in the 7th century (120) – although containing the busy industrial space may have equally been a factor. Note that the occupation hiatus at Clonfad ran from the 10th to 13th/14th century, after which a parish church was installed – indicating enduring local religious value to the site).

Features long held as signifying a defensive reaction to Viking raids are the iconic round towers at monastic seats like Clonmacnoise, Tullaherin, Devenish and Inis Cealtra. Attaining up to 30 m in height and with base diameters of 4.5–6.0 m, these highly impressive stone structures stood close to the church in the inner enclosure or occasionally stood against the enclosure bank (Lalor 1999, 73–86; O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013, 164–166). There are indeed references to such towers (and their monastic hosts) suffering in attacks (not just Viking) in the 10th–12th centuries, but also taking severe damage in storms and lightning strikes (perhaps signifying that some were timber-built in their first phase) (Lalor 1999, 91–93). The first literary reference belongs to AD 950 and recounts 'foreigners' burning the tower at Slaine along with its relics, bells and 'distinguished persons'. However, these towers seem, architecturally, to date only from the 10th century and while some overlap might exist with Viking raids, these bell-houses appear much more statements of authority and landmarks to pilgrims and locals and belong to a period when church (re)building in stone became widespread (ibid., 67–73; O'Keeffe 2004 views these as expressions of kingship; cf. Graham 1998, 140). As with dating the monastic enclosures, so we await adequate archaeological scrutiny of these round towers.

In late 8th- and 9th-century Francia both Charlemagne and Louis the Pious enacted what appears a fairly effective anti-Viking coastal defence system, combining forts, fleets, beacons and diplomacy, but with strong imperial leadership as a glue. But the growing threat is evident in the record of the abbot of the island monastery of Noirmoutier being given permission to build a refuge fortress in 830 –

implying an undefended but highly vulnerable abbey; however, just over a decade later the island (and perhaps the refuge-*castrum*) had become a Viking base (Haywood 1991, 123, 134. Logan 2005, 103 notes the Noirmoutier monks progressively relocating away – ending up in Tournous in 875 via Lunauld in 858. Fortified monastic refuges are part documented for the 10th century, such as above St Gall – cf. Fehring 1991, 137–138). With Louis the Pious' death in 840, civil wars wracked the Empire and Viking raids duly intensified, these often penetrating deep along rivers such as the Loire and Garonne (ibid., 124). We must assume monastic sites suffered heavily in this period and their communities sought safety inside defended towns – with surviving documentation indicating much renewal of these urban circuits in the second half of the 9th century (Sennhauser 1996, 205–206). To add to this list is the rampart and moat fortification of the palace-monastery complex of Saint-Denis, Paris, *c*. AD 870 under Charles the Bald (Loveluck 2005, 245–246); the scale of operations here signifying lengthy investment, however, not an emergency response (though since the king took refuge in the abbey in the 840s, one might anticipate earlier defensive provisions – Logan 2005, 102).

Figure 11.3. Clonfad aerial view (Image by Paul Stevens, © Valerie J Keeley Ltd., and the National Roads Authority, Westmeath County Council).

Figure 11.4. Clonfad view of excavation of outer enclosure ditch (Image by Paul Stevens, © Valerie J Keeley Ltd., and the National Roads Authority, Westmeath County Council).

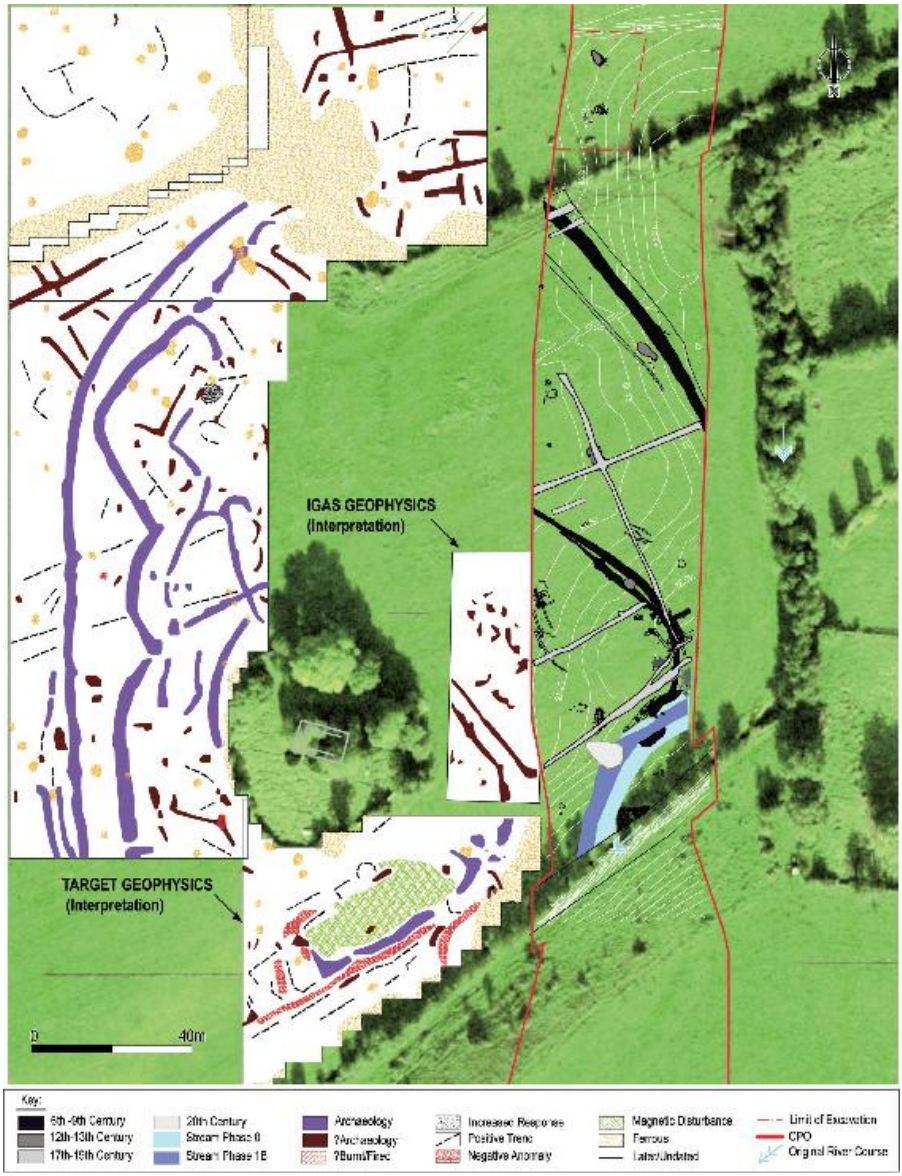

Figure 11.5. Clonfad, excavations and geophysics data combined (Image by Paul Stevens, © Valerie J Keeley Ltd., and the National Roads Authority, Westmeath County Council).

Contacts and Hosting

Much of the period AD 790–830 was stable across France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, and strong efforts came from the Carolingian royalty to join both Empire and its immediate neighbours: administration, tax, law, cultural renewal and the Church were all vehicles, and monasteries played their part. As De Jong (2005, 120–

122) emphasises, Frankish monasteries had long been bounded to their elite patrons, but Charlemagne and his successors augmented this, providing their main religious communities 'sufficient property to carry out its duties of prayer' while keeping the 'right to harness surplus ecclesiastical wealth to the stability of the realm by handing it out as a 'benefice' to his military men'. Endowing royal/imperial guardianship or *tuitio* secured or created loyalties, and in frontier or newly-won territories helped plant important roots. A royalty often travelling between palaces and monasteries strengthened this bond, elevating complexes like Fulda, Lorsch, Disentis, Müstair and Monte Cassino to Frankish flagships; abbots likewise appear mobile, employed as envoys and negotiators, but also agents to help communicate new legislation (cf. Innes 2005, 78–80, 85; noting that from the 790s Charlemagne travelled less but expected bishops and abbots to come to him – 75). Reforms to establish the Rule of Benedict as the core monastic rule were meanwhile instigated, with Benedict of Aniane providing the update – his 'master-narrative' eventually ratified by councils held under Louis the Pious in Aachen in AD 816 and 817 (Diem 2011; De Jong 2005, 118; Lawrence 1984, 68–73). These councils then instructed on the relationship between inside and outside the *claustrum*, and of the combinations possible and separations needed. These rules meanwhile fed into the formulation of the very recognisable monastic plan displayed in the much debated schematic for a monastery at St. Gall (Horn and Born 1979).

Sullivan (1998, 274–276) draws attention to the multiple implicit connections with the outside world and with visitors on the St Gall Plan. Reinforcing Horn and Born's (1979, I, 155–165) estimation that perhaps a fifth of the total area of the Plan was geared to spaces receiving visiting dignitaries plus their (armed and servile) retinues, Sullivan says how 'the creator of the Plan must have anticipated and applauded the constant presence of representatives of the *potentes*, including emperors, their power-wielding *missi*, great nobles, and ecclesiastical potentates' (1998, 274). No doubt many products of the monastic *scriptorium* and of its craft workshops (St Gall has, for example, units for saddlers, shield and sword makers) were to service these high elites (compare the prominence of the Collective Workshops at San Vincenzo from the 820s – see below). This signifies that such secular visitors were expected – the monastery being a

theatre for patrons to visit and so observe (and take away) the spiritual and material outputs; their patronage could make these places better equipped, more splendid and thus stronger in their tasks (Sullivan 1998, 284). The lack of a boundary to the monastery depicted on the St Gall Plan might then symbolise this mix: a tightly ordered set of religious and monastic spaces and activities, but one not formally cut off from the outside. Visiting *potentes* would, however, no doubt have been accompanied by an array of staff and soldiery and any armed escort (plus mounts) will have provided sufficient security for the duration, although we hear nothing of such operations, whether encamped (and stabled) outside the monastic gate or in attendant villages or even immediately within the precinct. But this 'open' system was not long-lived: as noted, after the 830s the fracturing of the Carolingian Empire would generate a much less secure landscape.

A 10th-Century Monastic Reconfiguration?

Reforms in the 10th century saw monasticism renewed, on a quite different footing and often with a quite different geography. For England this was 'an exclusively southern and midland enterprise. None of the former Northumbrian houses was revivified in Edgar's reign' (Foot 2006, 14 with fig. 1). This new English emphasis was far more internal and in fuller contact with urban sites; indeed, various abbots seemingly engaged in town planning from their abbey gates, as evident for Abbot Wulsin in 948 at St Albans, founding a market and laying out plots; potentially this monastic conurbanisation provided a new security to the monks – adding secular and economic supports (Slater 1998, 163, 171–172. Along the Thames, Bampton and Abingdon could fit this 'urbanising' process – Booth *et al.* 2007, 258–259; Blair 2010).

Do these new 10th-century sites have more defined enclosures? The question is yet to be posed in depth, although in urban contexts archaeologists and urban geographers have combined to examine property boundaries, lines drawn by a precinct wall in the town plan, and relationships to town walls and bridges (*e.g.* Slater 1998 for St Albans; Baker and Holt 1998 for Worcester). But again we find restricted data, limited excavations and no real standing archaeology to draw on to ask if such boundaries did more than demarcate. One

example is Bampton in west Oxfordshire, where a minster was established in a landscape with remnant Bronze Age barrows; burials begin here by the mid-9th century, although the religious community is first attested only in the mid-10th century. Excavation and plan analysis reveal the church sat in the south-west corner of a large oval enclosure (*c*. 250 × 200 m), with a ditch 4.0 m wide; the ditch was only back filled in *c*. AD 1100 by when the royal town and market had developed around the old minster (Blair 2010, 30–31). In Ireland, Graham (1998) prefers to see some monasteries only being enclosed in substantial fashion in the 10th and 11th centuries as they gain more urban roles and characteristics.

In France, one of the best studied cases of a monastic complex being fortified and semi-urbanised is at Tours, explored through archaeology, extensive building analyses and archives (Galinié 2007; 1988, 59–60; Marot 2013). The later 4th-century monastery of St Martin at Tours developed *c*. 750 m west of the late Roman *castrum* and episcopal town, but increasingly its shrine acted as settlement (local and pilgrim) and economic magnet. Probably in AD 918–919 the *burgus sancti Martini* was fortified, and this new *castrum* (medieval/ modern Châteauneuf) of *c*. 200 × 200 m formed an autonomous urban entity, boosted by wealthy houses in and around and by trade/craft zones between this and the Loire (Lorans *et al*. 2013, 216–219). While Viking threats are often cited as the cause for defence, the combination of enclosed religious zone and open economic zone speak as much of the abbey seeking to control its own space and revenue, independent of its 'mother-town'. Although the archaeology does not show the monastery as a defended 'island', the site's character overall had seemingly become much less 'monastic' (Marot 2013, 231–232. Intriguingly, its defensive walls and towers replicated the character of the late Roman *castrum* – 225). In Germany, we can cite the 9th-/10th-century fortified Domburg site at Münster, with subsequent urban development (Austermann 2013).

Of relevance is the fact that when German emperors such as the Ottonians toured in the 10th and 11th centuries, their stopovers tended to be at palaces in or adjoining fortified urban sites such as Ravenna and Classe in north-east Italy (Cirelli 2008, 144–146) and Ingelheim, Mainz and Cologne in the German territories (Reuter 1991, 86–89, 208–211), but many of these were still monastic seats, such as

San Severo at Classe or St Emmeram at Regensburg. St Gall in Switzerland, undefended still when Hungars threatened in the early 10th century, was fortified with a wall and 13 towers under Abbot Anno in the 950s (Sennhauser 1996, 207–208). Fehring (1991, 132–135) stresses how rural palaces of the 10th century were fortified; accordingly any monastic stopovers were likely also to have defences (Graham-Campbell and Untermann 2007, 348, noting Magdeburg, developed under Otto in the 920s and gaining monastery and then bishop in 937 and 955 respectively. Cf. Reuter 1991, 241–243 on other new and often fortified monastic foundations in Germany, Saxony and Switzerland, frequently established by bishops as reinforcements to their territory; see also Boschetti, this volume).

San Vincenzo al Volturno: A Case Study of Monastic Security

As outlined above, there is a patchwork of relevant data for charting 'monastic defence' in early medieval Europe, but rarely is the evidence full enough from sites to generate a really lucid image. But one major example is available to exploit, namely the monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno in central Italy, where the scale of excavations (ongoing since 1980 and mostly published) and the nature of the site – not encumbered by medieval and modern buildings – enable a substantial picture to be drawn of the complex's evolving architectural forms and material displays and for these to be linked to the relatively rich historical documentation (Hodges 1997). Indeed, the early medieval evidence is largely unparalleled. San Vincenzo was the focus of royal/princely/Beneventan investment and Frankish support in the 8th and earlier 9th centuries; lands, gifts and privileges made it a major landowner and its income and power are directly reflected in the built complex; we can also assume that royalty and dukes were hosted in the monastery, signifying a mix of religious, political and economic roles.

(i) San Vincenzo: 8th- and 9th-century planning

The archaeological investigations began with the assumption that the monastery founded *c*. AD 703 lay within an enclosure of some kind. This assumption proved to be erroneous. The earliest monastery

eschewed the opportunity to occupy a hilltop site and was instead located within a late antique estate centre, beside the river Volturno (Hodges *et al.* 2012). The site's significant enlargement under Abbot Joshua (792–817) pushed out to the river Volturno onto the Rocchetta Plain: the new abbey-church, San Vincenzo al Volturno, effectively formed a south flank of the settlement, while an open, secular *borgo* was created by the mid-9th century on the river's east side. The monastery and its associated village then covered *c.* 10 hectares (see Hodges *et al.* 2011a). The lack of defences here might denote the relative stability of the territory in the 8th century and the prominence of the abbey's shrine – after all, despite lying in Lombard Beneventan territory, Carolingian patronage was highly regarded.

The 9th-century monastery was initially divided into two parts (Fig. 11.6): a palace with its own access corridor to the abbey-church, and the *claustrum*, almost certainly an area wherein access was restricted that was also defined as sacred. A small room, described as the Vestibule during the excavations, connected the two parts (Hodges 1995). Here, most probably, a large door separated the palace quarters (with its own garden) from the *claustrum*. A second connection between these two worlds was a door from the palace corridor (to San Vincenzo Maggiore) into the upper, first-floor of the abbot's house at the *claustrum*'s north end (Hodges, forthcoming).

These palace and *claustrum* separations were sustained across the 9th century. However, in the 830s a new entrance to San Vincenzo Maggiore was created, then enlarged in the 840s. Presumably the *claustrum*'s south side was defined in some form to prevent lay visitors transgressing into the monks' quarters (Hodges *et al.* 2011a, 415–420). Security was a consideration in these arrangements: the abbot's sitting room had a lock; a cupboard in the refectory, presumably for crockery and other utensils, also had a lock; and at the south end of the monastery, the wide south door of workshop Room B in the Collective Workshop had a lock, perhaps to safeguard the raw materials inside (Sogliani 2008, fig. 12a-c). Whether security could be heightened when elite/royal visitors called and were entertained, accompanied by their retinues, cannot be ascertained.

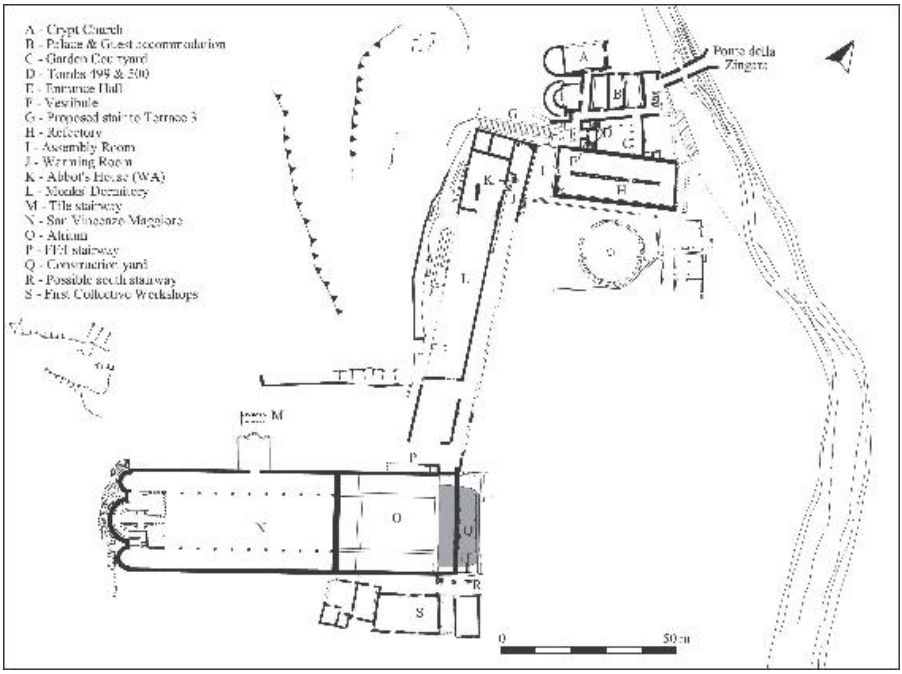
A - Crypt Church
B - Palace & Guest accommodation
C - Garden Courtyard
D - Tombs 498 & 500
E - Entrance Hall
F - Vestibule
G - Proposed stairs to Terrace 3
H - Refectory
I - Assembly Room
J - Warming Room
K - Abbot's House (WA)
L - Monks' Dormitory
M - Tile stairway
N - San Vincenzo Maggiore
O - Atrium
P - HH stairway
Q - Conventicle yard
R - Possible south stairway
S - First Collective Workshops
Ponte della Zingara
0
50 m

Figure 11.6. Plan of San Vincenzo al Volturno in the 9th century (Image from Hodges et al. 2011a).

The decline in royal patronage over the 9th century saw the monastery hunting for compensating resources. It looked first to minor donors in the 830s, increasing the scale of this strategy in the 840s by aggrandising the entry into San Vincenzo Maggiore for pilgrims while putting more emphasis upon the manufacture of prestige items as 'counter-gifts' for donors. By the 870s, therefore, exploiting the cult of Saint Vincent and utilising outputs from the Collective Workshop were key instruments for sustaining the monastery in an otherwise precarious ecological context (Hodges 2014). From this time, if not before, the authority lay with the abbot, who had to mastermind the regional politics as well as see to the monastery's management and security. Failing to come to terms with Bishop Athanasius of Naples led directly to the attack of 881 by his Arab mercenaries and to the desertion of the monastery as the abbot sought an accommodation with his nemesis.

(ii) The sack of 881

Archaeology has shed light on the infamous sack of the monastery in October 881, illustrating its limited defensive readiness (Hodges *et al.*

2011b). In an exceptionally long passage, the 12th-century *Chronicon Vulturnense* describes how the attackers were held back by the monks and their servants at the *Pons Marmoreus*, set east of the river Volturno. If the main defence was made here, we must assume that the war-band had already raided the *borgo* of San Vincenzo on this side of the river, where the monastery's servants lived. Any survivors presumably fled to the monastery, ultimately, according to the *Chronicon Vulturnense*, to change sides at a critical point in the fighting. However, at least two phases in the struggle can now be ascertained. First, before crossing the *Pons Marmoreus*, the attackers rained fire-arrows upon the abbot's house, with many falling short on the refectory's thatched roof (neither arrowheads nor traces of burning have been traced in either the area of the palace or the adjacent Crypt Church north of the refectory).

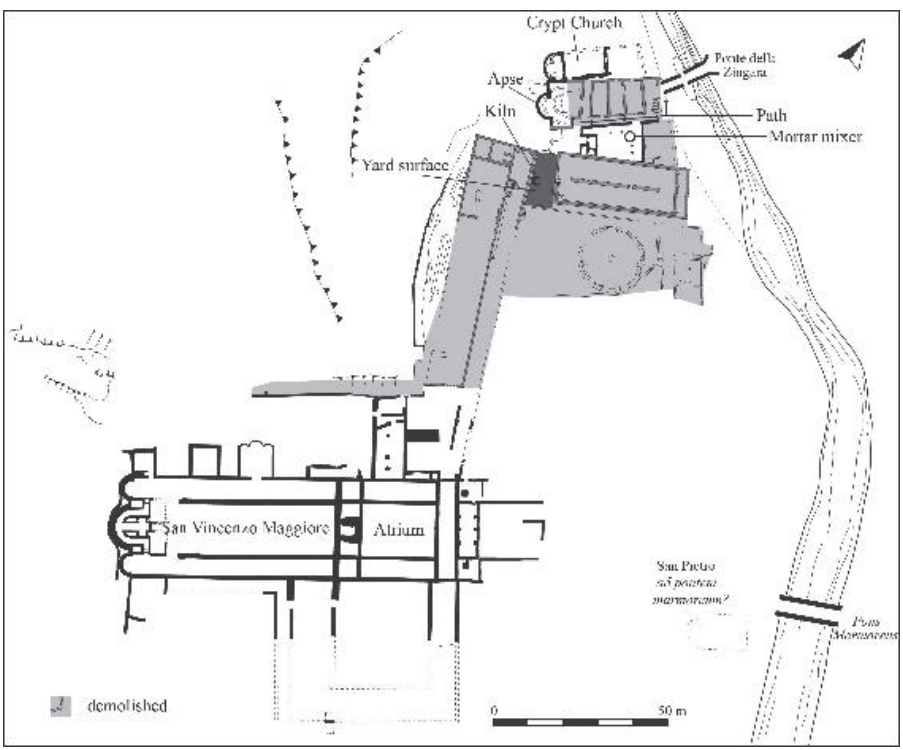

Figure 11.7. San Vincenzo al Volturno in the later 11th century (Image drawn by Sarah Leppard).

The second phase of the attack involved the raiders, having crossed the Volturno, forcing the doors of the Collective Workshop immediately south of the abbey-church, before comprehensively

destroying it, then breaking into San Vincenzo Maggiore. Yet the firing of the workshops involved setting fire to each room, rather than forcing ingress through Room B to the vaulted corridor leading into the *claustrum*. The destruction almost certainly occurred after the rooms were ransacked. Clearly the raiders sought out the precious and prestigious goods being made in these workshops – enamels, ivories and silverware. While the Chronicle describes the wanton festivities of the raiders in the basilica, the archaeology has found only limited traces of damage (though 11th-century refurbishments may well have removed most of this) (Marazzi 2011, 135).

However the sack itself proceeded, some aspects are clearer now that much of the *claustrum* has been excavated. First, the raiders focussed their attention upon the abbot, whose house may have then been the venue for elite reception at the monastery. More importantly, the house may have held the monastery's treasury, which, if it resembled that of nearby Monte Cassino (robbed in 843 – Citarella and Willard 1983), would have been a special prize for the attackers. Second, the Collective Workshop was evidently targetted: its contents, including enamels and silver inlaid jewellery, may even have been the raiders' principal objective. Finally, it is very clear that the cult centre of San Vincenzo in the annular crypt was not desecrated, nor, seemingly, was the palace, perhaps because this was already deserted and empty of fittings. The annular crypt was the sacred nexus of the monastery and leaving it untouched meant that San Vincenzo al Volturno might be re-established as a monastery, as indeed happened in the 11th century.

(iii) Two Romanesque monasteries; three plans (Fig. 11.7)

After the sack, the monastic community fled to the comparative security of the fortified city of Capua where they remained until *c*. 916. On returning to San Vincenzo their priority was not the renewal of the monastery, but, over the next century, investment – *incastellamento* – in their estates in the Upper Volturno valley (Marazzi 2012, 105–115, noting several later forged documents serving to emphasise this castle building strategy). Of the 15 villages created in this period, two have been examined archaeologically: Colle

Castellano had featured a small tower in the 9th century, but during the mid-10th century the hilltop was encircled with a powerful enclosure wall (Hodges *et al.* 2006); Vaccherecia, on the other hand, a community much closer to San Vincenzo, remained unfortified at this date (Hodges 2006). Defence, in other words, was considered an option in the monastery's territory at this time, but not always a necessity.

This may help to explain the next phases of site history. During the first half of the 11th century the monastery was reconstructed around the main church complex of San Vincenzo Maggiore. Initially, Abbot John IV (998–1007) restored the abbey-church; this was continued by his successor, Abbot Ilarius (1011–45), who also added a tower to the front (*CV* iii.78; this tower has been excavated: Marazzi 2008, figs 25, 71). At this time the arrangements for the cloister and other monastic services were presumably transacted in makeshift buildings clustered around San Vincenzo Maggiore as all the buildings to the north were in ruins. Another contemporary construction, identified in the 2014 excavations, lay on the Colle della Torre above the monastery: a substantial tower, possibly the abbot's dwelling. Perhaps emulating the construction of towers in villages at this time, does this tower speak to growing concern for the abbot's personal security or his desire to conform to the new aristocratic architectural rhetoric of the period? As it happens, the monastery soon faced the aggression of a local family, the Borelli, who in 1036–37 occupied and sacked the *turris monasterii* – presumably the hilltop tower – while the abbot was away; the 12th-century chronicler likened the event to the Arab sack of 881 (*CV* iii.79; see Feller 2002, 55–59; Marazzi 2011, 141). As a result, San Vincenzo lost a block of territory to these local lords (Marazzi 2012, Tav 9). Only under Abbot John V (1053–76) was there a significant rise in fortunes: emulating Abbot Desiderius' (1058–87) works at Monte Cassino, John constructed a new cloister south of the abbey-church (overlying the Collective Workshops) plus buildings on the north side of the nave and atrium (*CV* iii.89). All the 8th- to 9th-century buildings north of this new nucleus were demolished. It is too soon to determine whether the hilltop tower remained in use during John V's abbacy.

The archaeology of these two building episodes remains to be resolved, but no fortifications (apart from the separate hilltop tower)

formed part of this immense investment. Instead, the emphasis was once again upon the sacred authority of the structures, though after the 1060s these were tightly organised around the abbey-church. The 11th-century episodes suggest that, as in the 9th century, the formidable mass of buildings with locked doors was considered sufficient defence, at least if the political accords were respected. Indeed, we might conclude that, like Abbot Desiderius, Abbot John V's reaction to the increasing instability in central Italy, largely generated by the Normans, was to aggrandise the monastery's *sacred* authority with a substantial cloister and other richly decorated buildings.

(iv) The 12th-century fortified new abbey (Fig. 11.8)

The Norman Robert Guiscard's sack of parts of Rome and the increasing political instability of southern Italy likely persuaded the community at San Vincenzo to reconsider its security (Delogu 1996, 45–46; Marazzi 2011, 163–164). Under the erstwhile Cassinese monk, Abbot Gerard (1076–99), the decision was taken to abandon the vulnerable location on the river's west bank and to construct a new abbey with fortifications on the edge of the Rocchetta Plain, to the east of the river (Bowden and Gruber 2006). Was this shift an incentive for Farfa's Abbot Berardo II to scheme in 1097 to transfer his own old abbey to the summit of the nearby hill (Bougard *et al.* 1987)? In Farfa's case the proposed new complex was stopped by the monks; at San Vincenzo, by this time a much poorer house than its peer, the construction (using materials plundered from the 400-year old predecessor) was completed for consecration in 1117.

Noticeably, defence was a major element in the design of the new Romanesque monastery: the monastery was set between two rock-cut ditches that intermittently were partially filled with overflow water from the river Volturno; the north ditch dates back to Roman times, whereas a new south ditch, involving much quarrying, was cut specifically to form part of the defences. In addition, a large wall circuit was constructed, enclosing an area of *c.* 128 × 123 m (the south-west corner largely survives, incorporated into the existing abbot's palace). If the defences aimed to discourage aggressors, it did not succeed: in the 1140s King Roger II robbed the monastery of its treasure (*CV* iii.109–111; Marazzi 2011, 163, fn. 311).

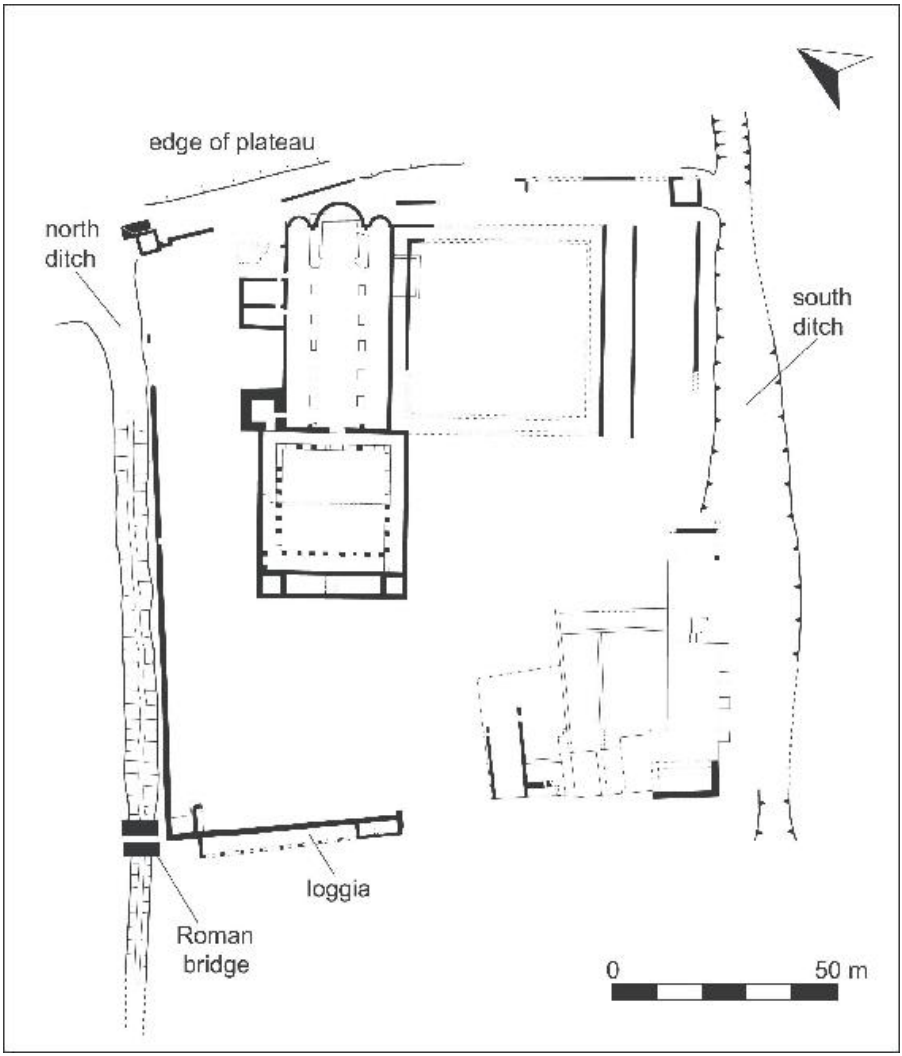

Figure 11.8. 'The New Abbey': San Vincenzo al Volturno in the 12th century (Image from Bowden and Gruber 2006).

(v) Discussion

The early medieval history of San Vincenzo al Volturno makes no reference to any defences for the monastery. The complex did, however, have a monastic precinct, a defined and sacred area. The archaeology discussed above otherwise reveals several important points about the monastery's public and community security:

- The 9th-century abbey was arranged into secular and sacred zones, each comprising connected modules. Technically certain

sections could be locked off from other parts: the abbot's inner sitting room was almost certainly locked when the building was destroyed in 881 as were the workshops. Security existed at a community level, separating administrators from the administered, even within the monastery's sacred zone. The prevalence of locked rooms illustrates the importance of authority in the monastery and its active recognition of the reform rule of Benedict.

- Royal and high elite visitors will have afforded some security to the abbey through the intermittent presence of armed retinues. Presumably locked doors and set access lines kept these people away from the monks' space.
- Even when princely concessions were made to the abbey to set up towers and castles in its territory from the latter 10th century, the monastery itself remained undefended; by then the complex was much shrunken, lacking the 9th-century high status workshop products – the need for protection instead lay with scattered landed properties and not with the diminished monastic community.
- San Vincenzo's major 12th-century defences demonstrated concern for security on a work-scale comparable with building the new abbey-church or its cloisters. But given its reduced landed resources, the new fortified abbey over-reached its capacity to sustain itself.

The archaeology of other monasteries in Italy, notably Bobbio, Farfa, Monte Cassino and Nonantola, reveals similar images: none of these were fortified in any way before the later 11th or 12th centuries. Yet none were strangers to attacks: in AD 843 Monte Cassino was sacked by local Beneventan lords and in the 880s Farfa and Monte Cassino suffered from Arab attacks, in each case made, we may surmise, to dislodge politically and economically obdurate abbots, brutally facilitating new political alliances. Certainly, Farfa and Monte Cassino manifest traces of the same modular topographic arrangements as San Vincenzo in the 9th century, constructing regulated security for the community locked within their doors. Actual fortifications, however, appear to have been eschewed in the (largely) false belief that political patronage would protect these materially affluent places.

Only as insecurity became more insidious and the political authority of monasteries more precarious did these monasteries consider defences (which, strikingly, they had already introduced by the later 10th century to dependent rural *castelli*). It is noticeable that the mid-9th century onward saw new attention paid to old urban circuits (La Rocca 2006) or the creation of new circuits – such as the part-extant Leonine walls around the Vatican (Gibson and Ward-Perkins 1979; 1983) and other papal works at seats like Cencelle and Ostia (Christie 2006, 397–399; see also Citter, this volume); meanwhile, the first towers appear within defensive enclosures in central Italian villages (Bianchi 2011; see Valenti, this volume) and the earliest proto-castles are attested (cf. Marasco 2013).

If the case study of San Vincenzo is an index of this era, monastic defence was simply not an issue before the mid-9th century in Italy. Security in a monastery was regulated by custom and rules, and this sacred regime was both respected and supported by political figures, and reinforced by the visits of high elites to the major abbeys. But even before the advent of the Arabs this support was waning, with centres like Monte Cassino and Bobbio being menaced by aggressive peers (cf. Destefanis 2002, 96). Yet abbots in the 10th and early 11th centuries failed to grasp their vulnerability to ruthless aristocrats. Although monasteries fortified their own villages, it was only the wider unrest of the later 11th century that led monasteries like San Vincenzo and Farfa to select new locations for their communities and simultaneously to invest in fortifications. By this time the political (and territorial) landscape had altered and once prominent monasteries like San Vincenzo had become marginalised.

Conclusions

All told, a basic, but varied picture of 'monastic defence' emerges: while for Italy there appears to be a hesitancy to endow monasteries themselves with fortifications until the 11th or 12th centuries, with a likely reliance on their power of tradition and protection from their saints and patrons (alongside mere locks and keys for doors and cupboards), these sites did suffer from earlier insecurities and upheavals, notably from Arab raiders (and mercenaries) in the second half of the 9th century. But the depth and durability of the Arab threat in Italy must be considered: their raids, incursions and outposts were

countered by watchtowers, fortified new towns and refortified old towns which limited penetrations inland. A strong contrast lies with the 11th century which saw progressive and lasting Norman territorial encroachments and stimulated a wider defensive response (alongside a growing use of defences as status display). Comparison might be drawn with the transition from sporadic to lasting Viking threat and presences in north-west Europe, which coincided with a weakening Carolingian state: initially the State provided a navy, military bases, refuges; subsequently communities needed to look more to their own safety or withdrew to towns which began to refortify themselves from the mid-9th century. Ireland and western Scotland fit this image too: while many early monasteries like Iona and Clonmacnoise possessed ditch and ramparts as defining units, we cannot view these as securely defensive; but Viking threats and internal strife in the 10th and 11th centuries appear to prompt change, whether site loss, 'strategic withdrawal' (such as Iona abbots preferring Durrow), defensive reinforcement or an urbanisation with walls. It is noticeable that seats like Lindisfarne, Hartlepool and Jarrow ended up being quitted: there was no effort to heavily fortify and resist; rather, their communities shifted away to defended sites – mainly urban. Increasingly, therefore, despite Alcuin's appeal to tighten up conduct and to trust in God, sanctity, prestige, saints, immunities and patrons were not enough to protect monasteries; abbots became more anxious and more secular and the old early medieval monasteries inevitably changed. The challenge remains for archaeology to flesh out this still patchy picture of monastic evolution in a changing world.

Note

1 On the event itself, Alcuin says: '… Never before has such an atrocity been seen in Britain as we have now suffered at the hands of a pagan people. Such a voyage was not thought possible. The church of St Cuthbert is spattered with the blood of the priests of God, stripped of all its furnishings, exposed to the plundering of pagans – a place more sacred than any in Britain'. Alcuin, *Letter to King Ethelred of Northumberland*, a. 793, on the assault by Viking raiders on Lindisfarne's monastery. Letter 12 in Allott 1974, 18–20.

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12

Controlling and Contesting Urban Spaces: Rulers and Urban Communities in Southern England and Northern France from the Later 9th to 11th Century

Ryan Lavelle

Introduction

Did the defensive capacity of urban spaces determine the abilities of their communities to control their own political fortunes in a wider regional, even 'national' framework?[1] Observations on an apparent shift from towns as the expression of royal authority – and an obvious interface between royal authority and the population – to towns being places where royal authority was contested and negotiated formed a significant part of my study of urban fortifications in the context of late Anglo-Saxon warfare (Lavelle 2010, 209–263). Central to that work is the place of urban centres in events in the 'Second Viking Age', a period which, in English terms, broadly covers events from the reign of Æthelred II ('the Unready', AD 978–1016) until the Norman Conquest of 1066 and, arguably, the initial stages of its aftermath (1067–1072). I was interested, and continue to be interested, in the relative importance of the towns that often survived Viking attacks in the 10th and 11th centuries, as well as those whose surrender was received by Viking and, later, Norman forces.

To an extent, this paper provides a continuation of that theme but

a broader perspective of the positions of urban communities in the upheavals which took place during the Viking Age in England provides the basis for some comparison with the late and post-Carolingian political machinations of West Francia, i.e. France, mainly in the area north of the Loire, allowing us to address the extent to which power and authority were devolved in early medieval polities (Coulson 1976). While an assessment of this devolution of power within urban spaces relies on factors such as the economic power of urban centres, the institutional infrastructure to which they belonged, the social structure of those towns and the nature of the threats that they faced, what is being debated here is the 'feudal' nature of the power of urban communities, associated with one of the research questions of this volume: who controlled the fortified settlements which urban communities inhabited? In addressing this, it is my contention that the independence of urban communities is a dynamic that becomes apparent through the later phases of the Early Middle Ages because, from a political perspective, towns functioned as 'regional central places' (see Loveluck 2013, 330–352); in this respect, invariably surrounded by an *enceinte* of some sort – a ditch and palisade or wall – with controlled access points, they were places from which authority might be held but also contained spaces in which authority could be contested, negotiated and, of course, re-asserted.

This paper provides a consideration of three main issues: firstly, historical evidence for the military and symbolic effectiveness of urban *enceintes* and recognition of such effectiveness in contemporary sources; secondly, the significance of the written evidence for a range of urban centres and their communities; and finally the role of urban space in encounters which saw its contestation (Fig. 12.1). A comparative approach to the urban experience of England and France is appropriate here because of the tendency of historians (*e.g.* Campbell 1989) to contrast the apparently centripetal nature of move towards centralised authority in England with the centrifugal dissolution of such authority in the emergent West Frankish polity. In many ways this is a product of the variance of the key sources of the different areas. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Whitelock *et al.* 1965), an annalistic record with an ostensibly close connection with the royal court of Wessex, reinforces that sense of a centripetal forces at work in the process of the unification of the English kingdom, and even where

a chronicler charts a series of disasters during the reign of Æthelred 'the Unready', the sense of damage inflicted on a national whole is apparent. By the 10th century, there is no such 'national' chronicle for the West Frankish kingdom as there been in the 9th but the study of this region is made possible through the comprehensiveness of the *Annals* of Flodoard of Reims, a set of records written by a canon and archivist of the cathedral of Reims (see Lauer 1905; trans. Fanning and Bachrach 2004). Chronicling the struggles associated with magnates' interests in northern France and beyond, the *Annals* were the product of a man who had even been imprisoned as a result of these struggles, and they thus provide little sense of a 'national' narrative.[2] What both these sets of historical records do have in common is the use of reference to towns and their communities in political circumstances, which is what makes their comparison appropriate for this paper.

Figure 12.1. Places mentioned in the text (Map: author).

However, some initial consideration of the nature of 'urban communities' is required. There is a subtle but important distinction here between the 'defended settlements' considered in this volume as a whole, and specifically *urban* settlements (and their communities), which were not necessarily – or at least not primarily – defended. Looking at Britain in the Central Middle Ages, Charles West (2010) has recently written on defining urban communities in general terms, which provides some useful insights. An urban community, he points out, was amorphous, characterised by tensions which meant that, within what might be defined as an urban space, the urban community was determined by the range of communities within it. To this may be added the connections of members of those communities with spaces and other communities outside the urban centre (for which, see Fleming 1993). Connections with a rural hinterland did not necessarily hinder an urban community from being defended – or at least defined – by an *enceinte* of some sort, though these varied in scale, sophistication, and state of repair before the 12th century (Wolfe 2009, 3–7). However, the urban community also went beyond that defended space; even where the distinctions were drawn between *urbani* and *suburbani* in relating events associated with a town, such as the massacre of Danes in Oxford on St Brice's Day (13 November) AD 1002, recorded two years later, in a charter for St Frideswide's church (Sawyer 1968, no. 909), or the repulsion of attackers of Noyon (dép. Oise) by soldiers based in the town with the aid of *suburbani* in 925 and in 932, recorded in the contemporary work of the northern French annalist Flodoard of Reims (Lauer 1905, 30, 52; trans. Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 13, 22), there was an inherent nominal link between the town as central place and those who lived in its immediate environs (see *e.g.* Dyer and Lilley 2012).

While it will be apparent that I have placed less emphasis in this paper on the economic functions of towns than many might like,[3] it is worth acknowledging that these had an obvious effect on the form of the communities inhabiting the urban space. The existence of urban guilds in England by the early 11th century, partly stemming from craft specialisation within urban communities, is suggestive too of coherence and solidarity of people inhabiting the same social space. But whether this manifested itself in a more far-reaching sense of

solidarity, let alone 'class' solidarity, is open to question. In the case of Exeter, it is interesting that the varied responses to the threat of William the Conqueror's action taken against the town in 1068 resulted in tensions within the urban community – arguably with clear fracture lines between them – and, as a result, different responses to the Norman threat (Lavelle 2010, 257–260; Higham 2013; see also below). We can see this sort of thing happening in London in 1016 and 1066 (Lavelle 2010, 260–262), as well as, for different reasons, in Rouen in 1090 (Hicks 2013). These specific events were not, as far as we know, a direct result of tensions between members of different guilds or even necessarily between those of different social status/class, but they draw attention to the fact that communities could vary in extent and scale, and could in fact represent different groupings with overlapping interests, an urban version of what Alex Woolf (2000) proposed as a multiple-communities model.[4]

In physical terms of the urban townscape, work by Oliver Creighton has shown how the 'reality of walled topographies' (2007, 54) was somewhat different from the notion of unified urban communities. The examples he cites – Durham, Lincoln and Bristol – are post-Conquest but he highlights the interests of particular parties, especially episcopal parties (notably Bishop Ranulf Flambard of Durham), in the establishment and contestation of urban walls. Creighton's analysis focuses on the development of seigniorial interests, contesting Sir Michael Postan's famous characterisation of medieval towns as 'non-feudal islands in the feudal seas' (Postan 1972, 239). An approach taken by Charles Coulson is similar. Though focusing on an even 'later medieval' period than that addressed by Creighton, Coulson's (1995, 195) take on municipal defences in the 14th–15th centuries is a useful perspective:

> "Town walls, like castles, were much more than varieties of 'military architecture'. Outwardly they were truly 'the castles of communities'; inwardly, they were patrician projects to which the politics of corporate aggrandisement and of oligarchic domination were central."

While Susan Reynolds has sensibly warned against the back-projection of the inception of self-governing urban communities (Reynolds 1977, 91–117; see also Reynolds 1984, 155–218), the dominance of elites within an enclosed urban space is a sensible motif to keep in mind for

our period of study. If the urban oligarchs and episcopal lords, whose parchment trail is so prevalent in the Late Middle Ages, can be seen as a dominant force then, their trail into the Early and Central Middle Ages may not be so cold.

Recording and Assessing the Military Functions of Towns

The records of military functions of towns are apparent in the narrative primary source material. Although many issues lie behind the motivations of a medieval author (especially the religious lessons to be drawn, and showing off a classical education through textual allusion), in accounts of the taking of a town it is often the authority of one or more of the parties that is explicitly relevant. There is a general recognition of this in the writing of narrative sources.

As I have noted elsewhere, it might, admittedly, be perverse to argue that submission could be construed as an indication of strength but the nature of the submission is important. Under particular circumstances, it could indicate the (relative) independence and/or strategic or political strength of an urban centre and its community. Thus the surrenders of towns across swathes of southern and midland England in the early 11th century indicate the fall of Æthelred's England to the armies of Swein Forkbeard and Cnut the Great. On the one hand, this is a *Bad Thing* in the eyes of the Æthelredian author of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* who recorded it a few years later (s.a. 1013, 1016; trans. Whitelock *et al.* 1965, 92–93, 96; see Keynes 1986). On the other hand, the fact that each of these submissions took place on the basis of individual towns, often in response to the arrival of a Viking army there, is indicative of the fact that each of these places had to be considered and negotiated with in their own right, sometimes backed up with the granting of hostages, who may have represented the submission of the town (Lavelle 2006, 274, 279–284). It is interesting to note that a large proportion of the towns in England where surrender is recorded as being received in the Second Viking Age were also urban sites where assemblies had taken place (Lavelle 2010, 255–258).

Although the doom-laden woes heaped upon the memory of these years by the Æthelredian Chronicler suggest otherwise, the situation

which prompted those woes does not seem to have been much different from the resistance and individual surrender of midland and northern towns to conquering West Saxon kings (Edward the Elder, Athelstan, Edmund) and one Mercian queen (Æthelflæd) in the early 10th century. The strategic positioning of the Danelaw polities, which depended upon certain towns, was undermined by the surrender of particular places, though in this case, of course, there was no Anglo-Scandinavian Chronicler to record the series of woes that befell the towns of the Danelaw in the manner of the Æthelredian Chronicler.

Thus those early 10th-century authors of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* who wrote from West Saxon and Mercian perspectives – annals relating to the activities of Edward the Elder between 911 and 921, and those of his sister, the Lady Æthelflæd, between 910 and 918 (Whitelock *et al.* 1965, 61–68; Baker and Brookes 2013; Konshuh 2014), and the (?Worcester) poet who composed the work later forming the 942 entry of the *Chronicle* (Whitelock *et al.* 1965, 71) – show the taking of territory in the midlands and north of England through the control of *burhs*. The 942 entry's poem, Don Scragg (2003) has noted, linked with the triumphal battle narrative of the *Battle of Brunanburh*, a memorialisation which also recalled, if incidentally, the control of a *burh* (Williams 2016). Writing a different sort of narrative around the same time, Flodoard of Reims used the many urban centres dotting northern France as the setting for the representation of the contestation of power.

Scholars commenting on the military history of the Central Middle Ages have, in recent decades, begun to appreciate urban sieges as a phenomenon as significant as castle sieges (see Corfis and Wolfe 1999). That significance is owed to the continuity of the walled town as a means of demonstrating power, and indeed authority, through the Early Middle Ages (Bachrach 2000).[5] Such power was evidently contested. There are some eight direct references in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to sieges or assaults on fortifications in late 9th- and 10th-century England between AD 868 and 994, of which five provide some indication of their duration as sieges (Table 12.1; others are alluded to: see Lavelle 2010, 226–230). Flodoard of Reims, like other continental chroniclers, records far more – 28 between AD 919 and 966 – suggesting that sieges there were common, and far more common between Franks than between Vikings and Franks. Although

Flodoard is less forthcoming than the authors of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* about the length of sieges, there are enough data to draw some comparisons (Table 12.1; Fig. 12.2), which show that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tended to record the length of sieges when Anglo-Saxons were the victors, which, perhaps unsurprisingly, tended to be the longer of the sieges (the limited term of West Saxon service at Thorney in 893 is not specifically recorded); Vikings did not attempt – or at least were not recorded as attempting – long sieges. In France and elsewhere on Flodoard's radar, we may draw conclusions that towns could hold out in a siege, with negotiation of conditions often following the commencement of a siege.

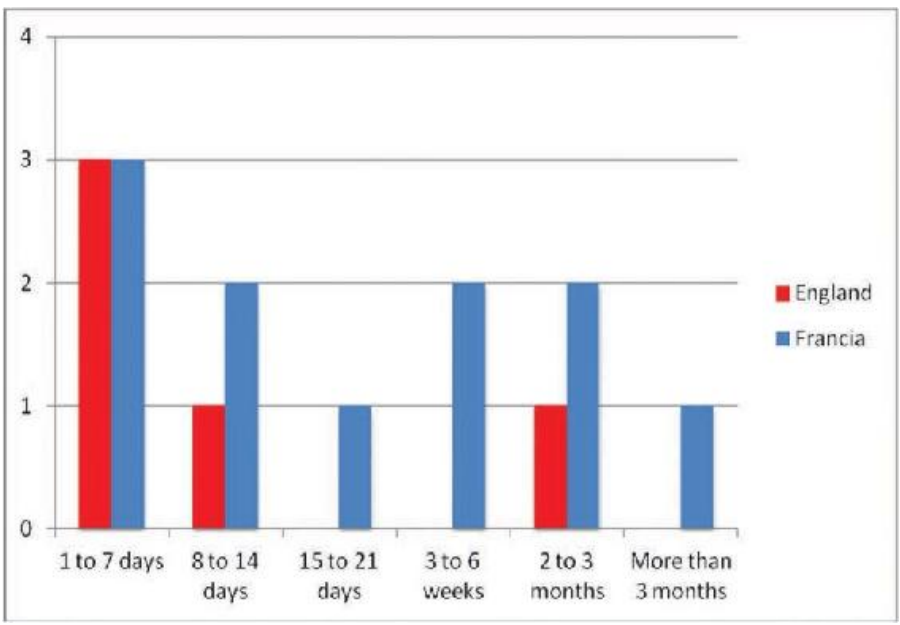

Figure 12.2. A comparison of siege lengths recorded in Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entries and Flodoard's Annals (see Table 1 for details).

Perhaps smaller sites such as Château-Thierry (dép. Aisne) could endure for some time in sieges (as in 934, though part of the *oppidum* fell during a night attack), because their comparatively small size lent them defensibility at strategic points in the landscape. Conversely, smaller sites may have been more frequently invested in siege for longer periods, perhaps because 10th-century lords could not command particularly large armies with the logistical means to invest a large site (a matter which bears comparison with attempts to storm fortifications both in England and France in this period). The larger

urbes of Reims and Poitiers feature in this dataset and the duration of sieges recorded there may indicate the ability of an urban settlement to withstand a siege.

Table 12.1. Sieges with approximations of recorded durations in *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entries* and Flodoard's *Annals*.

No. of days	*Year and place*	*Besiegers vs. Besieged*
1	917. Towcester (Oxon.)	Force (*here*) from Northants and Leicester and north ('intending to take it by storm' [*7 pohton þæt hie sceoldan abræcan*] vs. Edward the Elder's *fole*: defended until relieved
1	917. *Wigingamere*	Force (*here*) from Mercia and East Anglia vs. Edward the Elder's men; defended, with goods around seized.
2	893. Chester (Ches.)	Force (*fyrd*) (from Wessex? W. Mercia?) vs. large *here* from East Angles and Northumbrians.
3	949. Omont (dép. Ardennes)	Dodo, brother of Archbishop Artoldus of Reims vs. excommunicate Archbishop Hugh of Reims; taken by night-time wall-climbing.
5	Chausot (dép. Marne)	Archbishop Artoldus vs. men of Heribert (captured in 938); garrison surrendered on arrival of King Louis
'several' (< less than a week?)	926. *Pagus* of Arras (Pas-de-Calais)	King Raoul and Count Heribert vs. 'Northmen' encamped in forest; siege ends when Vikings counter-attack 'after several days' (*post aliquot dies*).
8	947. Reims	Hugh the Great with excommunicate Archbishop Hugh of Reims vs. *fideles* of king and Archbishop Artoldus of Reims; Hugh withdraws on the eighth day.
14	878. prob. Chippenham (Wilts.)	West Saxons vs. Viking *here*, pursued to *geweorc* after victory in battle; peace agreed in West Saxons' favour (on location, see Lavelle 2010, 229 and 311–313)
14	958. Coucy-le-Château (dép. Aisne)	King Lothar, Archbishop Artoldus of Reims *et al.* vs. Hardouinus, *subiscrus* of Count Theobald of Tours; siege of *arx*; resolved by agreement, with hostage-giving.
21	931. Reims	King Raoul, Hugh the Great, Boso *et al.* vs. 'clergy and people' of Reims, who had refused the king's choice of bishop, *clericus* uperaid to besiegers
30	947. Mouzon (dép. Ardennes)	King Louis, with Lotharingians, vs. excommunicate Archbishop Hugh of Reims; Louis's vow to take Mouzon unfulfilled.
c.42 ('6 weeks')	933. Château Thierry (dép. Aisne)	King Raoul vs. Heribert's force, headed by Walo, royal victory implied in the holder of the castle, Walo, committing himself (*se commisit*) to Queen Emma. Walo's garrison (*custodes*) later hand back to Heribert
60 (prob.)	893. Thorney (islet, prob. near Iver, Bucks.)	West Saxon force (*fyrd*) vs. Danes encamped on island; (many?) West Saxons leave at end of terms of service (60 days?) and, according to details provided by Æthelweard, a Mercian force brings the Danes to a peace agreement (on location, named by Æthelweard, and probable service time, see Lavelle 2010, 98–99 and 199)
60 ('almost 2 months')	953. Mainz (Rheinland-Pfalz)	King Otto vs. Duke Conrad of Lotharingia; Conrad makes agreement with king, handing over hostages, then seizing Metz.
60	955. Poitiers	Hugh the Great with King Lothar vs. unnamed people of Poitiers (Count William of Aquitaine was away); Count of Roucy seizes and burns *castrum* of St-Radegunde but siege called off because of 'lack of supplies'. Count William only arrives when royal army retreats.
90–120 (to '4th month')	934. Château-Thierry	King Raoul and Hugh the Great vs. men of Heribert of Vermandois; part of *oppidum* taken 'in the fourth month' by Walo, former holder, and his men; *arx* held by *fideles* of Heribert, who gave (exchanged) hostages to end the siege. Siege later resumed by Hugh after disagreement regarding hostages

There is an evident sense of the development of military history in the accounts of the 10th-century sieges of walled towns in France recorded in Flodoard's *Annals*, a sense of development which is enhanced if the later 10th-century accounts of urban spaces in the narrative histories of his successor, Richer, are also taken into account (Lake 2011). In Flodoard's *Annals*, numerous sieges are cited, though he relates only two as requiring 'machines': one in an assault led by King Louis IV on an *arx* ('stronghold') newly built by Heribert of Vermandois, which was undermined in the siege (s.a. 938: Lauer

1905, 70; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 30); the other, of an evidently small *munitio* rather than a town (at Mareuil, dép. Marne) in 952, required the erection of 'many [siege] machines all around' (*multis undique machinis*), perhaps because it had been 'recently built in the river' (*intra ipsum fluvium nuper construxerat*) (Lauer 1905, 133; trans. adapted from Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 57).[6] Undermining is recorded, to 'completely' destroy a fortification, after, rather than during, a siege at Chausot (Marne) in 940 (Lauer 1905, 75; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 32).

In other cases, attacks were more rapid; only one was on an *oppidum* 'by storm', and that was a place well within Lotharingia (Zülpich (Nordrhein-Westfalen) in 925; Lauer 1905, 31; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 14). But Flodoard records surprise attacks (a *munitio* named Montfélix (dép. Marne) in 954; Coucy-le-Château (dép. Aisne) in 958) and surreptitious commando-style entries (Noyon (dép. Oise) by the Count of Arras in 932; Château-Thierry, during the 'fourth month' of a siege in 934; Laon (dép. Aisne) by King Louis IV's men climbing the walls at night, in 949; Châtillon-sur-Marne (dép. Marne) and Omont (dép. Ardennes), at night, also in 949; the *muntio* of Braisne (dép. Aisne), via 'secret entry', in 950;[7] Metz in 953; the *castrum* – i.e. monastic precincts – of St-Radegunde next to the *urbs* of Poitiers in 955), while Dijon was taken through *ruse de guerre* in 960 by Count Robert, son of Heribert II of Vermandois, 'pretending' (*fallens dolo*) to be the king's *fidelis* to other royal partisans (Lauer 1905, 52, 58, 122, 125, 128, 136, 140, 141, 145, 148; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 22, 24, 53–55, 58, 61, 62, 65). Such accounts of actions may be simplistic attempts by a contemporary historian to provide impose an artificial level of clarity in an interpretation of events, and to this end it is interesting that there are fewer accounts of treachery, which by its nature, could be wrongly attributed in immediate hindsight or because of the difficulty in detecting actual intention (Montreuil (dép. Pas-de-Calais) in 929; Mouzon (Ardennes) in 930; Noyon in 932; Château-Thierry in 933 and 937; Clastres (Aisne) in 944; Omont and Coucy-le-Château in 949; Lauer 1905, 44, 46, 52, 55, 56, 65, 92, 121, 122, 124; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 18, 19, 22, 23, 29, 39, 52, 53). The difficulties in attempting to storm a town are indicated by Flodoard's opinion on the failure of a rapid attack on his home town of Reims in 947, 'as though it could be

captured quickly' (*quasi mox capturus*) – it couldn't. Sieges were thus often still the order of the day but, as I have suggested was the case for Anglo-Saxon England (Lavelle 2010, 247–248), the fact that *ruses de guerre* were required for their successful conclusion, often after a siege had dragged on, is itself indicative of the overall defensibility of towns.

These events are all quite straightforward in terms of either a militarily functionalist reading of the evidence or indeed, given that the 10th century is the period that spans the Carolingian public wars and the castle-based warfare of the 11th, a 'feudalistic' reading. It is the separate defended spaces, citadels if you like, often referred to as *castra* or *munitiones*, within the urban fortifications that allowed them to function, thus showing the significance of lordship within these. The place of these in an urban context is discussed below but we should note here that the size of fortifications was not always the factor which determined their position and role; given the fact that vallation determined status, the very delineation that vallation entailed was important. Although a tower (*turris*) had probably functioned at Laon for around half a century prior to 988, Richer of Reims (IV.17) noted that it was not until the events of that year that the 'low walls' (*muris humilibus*) surrounding it were built up (Lake 2011, 2:234–235). Perhaps the nature of the meaning of the tower had changed as late Carolingian power gave way to Robertian/ Capetian power, an issue which was very apparent in Laon, where there was a brief return to Carolingian power in 988, and the re-defence of the town was invested with meaning by its captor, the Carolingian pretender, Charles of Lorraine. However, that walls within a fortification could still be seen as functioning – and presumably did function – while being *perceived* as 'low' may be a reflection of the change in urban warfare in the course of the 10th century that what had worked well in the mid 10th century may have been less effective by the century's closing decades.

Nonetheless, whatever the form, at a basic level, a fortified site functioned as what, in modern military parlance is often referred to as a 'force multiplier'. Addressing Anglo-Saxon *burhs*, Bachrach and Aris (1990) provide detailed calculations of kill zones and rates of fire, as well as the kinetic potential of 9th-century archery, which can provide plenty of scope for discussion. One does not need to go into great

detail to appreciate the main thrust of their thesis. Put crudely, as a 12th-century addition to the Harley Psalter showed graphically in its illustration of an urban siege, a poorly-armed, less-well-trained person – man or woman – could stand on a rampart with a rock and throw it down, and a well-armed, well-trained warrior could do little to avoid it beside duck and hope (Lavelle 2010, 226) (see Fig. 12.3).

There is, of course, much more to the activities of the defenders of a walled urban space and the responses of those attacking it than mere rock-throwing but we can see where Bachrach and Aris's ideas have value if we pause to consider the implications for the defenders: how high was the rampart? How heavy the rocks? How many more could the defender throw before the attacker or his comrades reached the top of the rampart? However much many historians and archaeologists may wish to disassociate themselves from the grubby affairs of killing in the Middle Ages, its mechanics were of direct interest to people who had power or those who aspired to power; or at least – and this amounted to the same thing – such people wished to be *seen* as having an interest in the mechanics of defences. In the *Annals of Fulda*'s entry for 882 (Reuter 1992, 92) a group of Frankish nobles were caught out when they took advantage of a truce to look around a Viking fortification at a site known as *Ascloha* (probably Asselt (now in Limburg province, Netherlands) on the River Meuse). The episode is much cited in terms of the peace-breaking that resulted (*e.g.* Bauduin 2009, 199–223) and, as the annalist intimated, a Viking encampment offered trading opportunities, but it seems the Frankish visitors took keen interest in the way in which the fortification had been constructed, either in terms of thinking of how to overcome it or in terms of copying it (Lavelle 2010, 229). A century later, in Richer of Reims's *Histories* (IV.19 and 46), both Charles of Lorraine and Bishop Adalbero of Laon are portrayed as surveying the city's fortifications: in Charles's case his tour of the circuit followed a withdrawal of a siege and apparently resulted in some rebuilding, while the bishop 'inquired into and gave his opinion about the city's defenses' (*de urbe munienda ipse querit et deliberat*) (Lake 2011, 2:236–239, 292–293). We might note that Adalbero featured in Richer's account as something of a bogeyman, a figure whose eventual murder of Charles of Lorraine ultimately ended hopes of the revival of the Carolingian dynasty (Glenn 2004, 115–121). In that respect, one may

wonder if, for an ecclesiastical author, taking a keen interest in fortifications may not, ultimately, be a *Good Thing*, especially for a man of God (a salutary lesson for readers and writers of this volume?) – but the relationship between power and fortifications is again underlined. Fortifications were of interest to important people; therefore, if you wanted to be important, you had to been seen to be interested, and thus demonstrate public authority.

Links between the essentially 'tactical' detail of the immediate environs of the urban *enceinte* and the strategic level of the systems in which they functioned were evidently crucial. The early 10th-century document known as the Burghal Hidage should not go unmentioned here as a source for such links, and its relationship with the archaeological evidence for defended *burhs* is often seen as central to their study (Hill and Rumble 1996; cf. Baker and Brookes 2013 and Christie, this volume). That document is of relevance to this paper in the question of the influences between England and West Francia. It is now over four decades since David Hill and J. M. Hassall (1971) drew attention to the links in the influences between West Frankish and West Saxon fortifications of the 9th century, citing the establishment of a *burh*-like fortification of the bridge of Pont de l'Arche (dép. Eure) on the Seine downstream of Paris in the context of the fortifications of 9th- and 10th-century England. Simon Coupland (1991) responded to the then widespread notion of a 'network' of fortified bridges in West Francia with the comment that Pont de l'Arche was the only site with clear evidence of fortification. Coupland made no specific comparison with Wessex but that issue is not far from the surface. While in some ways it is unfair to hold up his article as an indication of the minimalist interpretation of West Frankish networks against the Vikings, I suspect that comparison between the West Franks and West Saxons is again more feasible in terms of both networks *and* fortification, given David Pratt's more recent interpretation of the religious imagery of early medieval kingship, encompassing warfare, in the reign of Alfred the Great (871–899) (Pratt 2007, 93–111). The Burghal Hidage played a role in expressing the *idea* of the authority of kings. In many respects it may have been as much an idealised reading of the resources available to the kingdom as a working document and, in this, comparison with a Frankish edict of AD 864, that of Pîtres is possible. Although very different in form from the Burghal Hidage, the

Edict of Pîtres was a Carolingian aspiring-emperor's attempt to rework the Theodosian Code as a statement on public authority (Nelson 1993), taking place at a palace which was linked directly with Charles's refortification of Pont de l'Arche two years earlier (*Annals of St Bertin* s.a. 862 and 864 in Nelson 1991). In that sense, it provides a parallel: fortifications in the Carolingian west – in Anglo-Saxon England as in Francia – were a response to an idealistic notion of the operations of a ruler, but in times which demanded practical defensive action, a practical dimension played an integral role in these statements of power and public authority.

Figure 12.3. The defence of a town illustrated in a 12th-century addition to the Harley Psalter, after a Carolingian original (London, British Library Harley MS 603, fol. 32v. Reproduced with permission).

A decade after the Edict of Pîtres, a capitulary issued at Quierzy (dép. Aisne) notes Charles' instruction for the completion of a *castellum* at Compiègne (dép. Oise) and for enquiries to be made regarding *castellis* on the Seine and Loire, as well as the *castellum* of St-Denis, near Paris (Coulson 1976, 33). If these were not urban communities in form, the attention to public fortifications is suggestive of some sense of strategic organisation of fortification. Recently, Jacques le Maho put the renewal of Rouen in upper Normandy among the establishments of 'at least' seven fortifications, probably from the last two decades of the 9th century. He sees this as tentative evidence for urban settlements along the lower Seine around Rouen for a Wessex-style system of fortification (2013, 23–27).[8]

Links across the Channel and the feedback loop between later

Carolingian and West Saxon royal policies may not end with the 9th century. The attention on the role of the archbishop of Reims and other nobles in the control of fortifications in both Flodoard and Richer's narrative accounts may provide a false contrast with an emphasis on royal power – whether Mercian or West Saxon (Konshuh 2014) – in the *burhs* in 10th-century *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. However, given the upbringing at the court of Æthelstan of Louis IV 'd'Outremer', son of Charles the Simple and of Æthelstan's sister, Eadgifu (Foot 2011, 46–47; Richer II.2–3 in Lake 2011, 1:160–167), we may wonder how many of Louis's policies in France, following his return as a young man with the support of Æthelstan in 936 and the military muscle provided by an English fleet in 939 (Lauer 1905, 73; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 28, 31–32) had been influenced by his uncle's experiences and indeed knowledge of the recent history of Danelaw towns. Perhaps tellingly, Richer records Louis's presence in York at the court of Æthelstan in 936, which suggests that he moved around with it, and one of the rare instances of a record of the use of beacon fires related to Anglo-Saxon England refers to the signalling of Louis's arrival across the Channel.[9]

The turbulent reign of Louis IV (936–952) is marked by many episodes of siege warfare but reveals hints of a possible *burh*-building policy in France. First is the restoration of a *castrum* and *portus* at *Guisum*, in the Pas-de-Calais (Flodoard, s.a. 938, in Lauer 1905, 69; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 30; Richer II.8, in Lake 2011, 2:180–181; Maclean 2008, 176). This was the territory of Arnulf, Count of Flanders, who, as grandson of King Alfred, was first cousin once removed to King Louis. If *Guisum* was Guines, as Lauer suggests, Arnulf may have just re-taken the stronghold or was just about to, following the death of a certain Danish chieftain, Siegfried, who, according to the 12th-century author Lambert of Ardres, had held it from the count (chs. 9–11 in Shopkow 2000, 60–61). Although, as Simon Maclean (2008, 175–178) notes, relations between King Louis and his cousin seem to have soured in 939, after Arnulf diverted an English fleet sent to help Louis, events in 938 may indicate a rather more vigorous policy of fortification work under Louis than the more frequent fire-fighting, often resulting in the levelling of fortifications (*e.g.* at other times in 938), reported by Flodoard.

Louis's extension of the fortification at Laon prior to 949, which

included a new tower (*turris*) associated with the royal residence (Lauer 1905, 122; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 53), may be the other hint of policy. Although noting possible 9th-century origins for a building campaign, Jackie Lusse has observed that the extended *enceinte* (*c*. 1900 m) provides for an expanded population of the *castrum* by the end of the 10th century (1992, 230–231, 253; see below).[10] It is worth noting Hill's reading of the urban reforms under Æthelstan and the importance of port-reeves (*portgerefan*) as royal agents in each town (Hill 2000, 174–175). The language of Flodoard and Richer, as well as our preconceptions of the fragmented nature of 10th-century politics, place emphasis on the 'feudal' nature of the relationship between lords and the men who held fortifications, but it is worth considering the extent to which Louis's *fideles*, holding fortifications on his behalf (especially apparent in the 944 entry: Lauer 1905, 91–92; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 39), may have been envisaged – by Louis, at least – as equivalents of those acting in a public capacity on behalf of the English kings Æthelstan and Edmund in towns across the Channel.

Nonetheless, in our rush to see systems of organisation reflective of maximal pictures of authority, we perhaps forget how early medieval towns in the Viking Age were once most commonly read, both in older historiography and in the Early Middle Ages – as *Fluchtburgen*, places of sanctuary for the population in the immediate area. The record of Winchester's predicament in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 1006, with the inhabitants of the town looking upon a Viking army passing the town on their way south, is a powerful account of the realities of warfare in an urban context (Whitelock *et al*. 1965, 88). Again comparison may be made with France and the fuller narrative provided by Flodoard, who recorded the burning of Amiens in 925 as a result of a fire which 'had been poorly tended by the refugees' (*male proviso confugientium*) from the Beauvaisais and the *pagus* of Amiens, and the death of the bishop of Dol in the church of the *ciuitas* in 944, crushed by a 'great crowd' (*multitudinum*) (Lauer 1905, 30, 94; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 13, 40). While doubt may be cast on whether Flodoard is accurate in attributing blame at Amiens (given the propensity of woes to be blamed on outsiders, even if from only just outside the urban centre), we seem to encounter here refugees in townscapes in times of insecurity and anxiety, evidently caused by

Viking ravaging. However, it is interesting to note that we seem to encounter records of refugees in the townscape when something went wrong – presumably more than the bishop died in 944 but to Flodoard, some distance from Brittany and perhaps even naming the wrong city(!), this was the death worth recording.[11] These records are nonetheless a salutary indication of the logistical difficulties for expanding towns in providing a function of security.

The Range of Urban Communities and their Terminology

Barbara Yorke (2013) recently observed that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does not neatly replicate academics' use of the term *burh* (see also Christie, this volume). Other terms – *geweorc*, *fæsten*, and *byrig* – are far more common in the 9th-century annals (see Table 12.2). There may be some parallel here with the notion of differences between *fyrd* and *here*, as terms which *tend* to distinguish Anglo-Saxon and Viking forces. *Fæsten* tends to be the description employed to refer to fortified spaces used by Vikings rather than West Saxons, though, like *here*, it is not the exclusive term to describe the military phenomenon. I suspect that the distinction is perceptual, and concerns context rather than function. *Fæsten* is often used to describe a fortification in a place already difficult to access, in woods or close to water, located in a place of strength; thus the stronghold that it implies is a 'place within a place', an inner space (indeed, rather like a citadel within an urban *enceinte*). However, the definition remains something referring to its function at a given moment. One of the Viking *fæstennu*, that built outside Rochester (itself a *cæstre* in the *Chronicle*, perceived as a Kentish *ciuitas* in at least one 8th-century Mercian charter [Sawyer 1968, no. 131; Campbell 1973, no. 13]), is referred to in the same annal (for 884) as a *geweorc*. Another account (for 895) refers to a fortification on the River Lea as both *geweorc* and *byrig*, suggesting that words are not specific in their military application but that the military function is linked to a wider notion of perception. Yorke also notes the significance of 'central places' temporarily employed in a strategic context (2013, 101). Although she links many such works with urban populations, it is interesting that few of the fortifications described as *geweorc* (a term Yorke considers a description of 'timber

and earthwork fortifications') became urban sites, let alone places named in the Burghal Hidage. Perhaps where a large (formerly Roman) urban centre needed to be recorded in the *Chronicle*, its urban function was already apparent in the place-name (*e.g. Wintanceastre*, Winchester, in 860; *Escanceaster*, Exeter, in 877) and may not have needed to be described by anything more than the reference to the name.

Table 12.2. Terminology of fortifications in the late 9th-century entries of the *Anglo-Saxon* Chronicle.

Viking *Geweorc*	**West Saxon *Geweorc***
Nottingham, 868	*Athelney, 878*
Chippenham (prob), 878	*Andredesweald, 892*
Rochester, 885	*Fortresses generally, 893*
Milton Regis, Kent, 893	
Essex, 893	
Chester, 893	
Rivers Lea and Severn, 895	
Viking *Fæsten*	**West Saxon *Fæsten***
Rochester, 885	...
Kent, 892–893 (*wudu-fæsten, wæter-fæsten*)	
Buttington-on-Severn, 893	
Viking *Byrig*	**West Saxon *Byrig***
River Lea, 895	'every *byrig* east of the [R.] Parret', 893

Byrig as place-name element: London: 872, 893, 895; Shoebury, Essex: 893; Badbury Rings, Dorset: 899/900

Although I have drawn on 9th-century Wessex and southern England for fortifications cited above, a cross-Channel comparison with Flodoard's 10th-century narrative is instructive. While medieval authors are notoriously difficult to harvest for their 'technical vocabulary' of fortifications (Bachrach 1975), the context of Latin terminological use has some value. Flodoard uses specific vocabulary to describe towns in terms of the function that they fulfilled at a particular time: *castrum*, *munitio*, *oppidum*, *urbs*. While *castrum* or

munitio might be more often associated with smaller fortifications, *urbs*, signifying a town (or city) of some size, seems to be associated with an episcopal function within urban centre, as Flodoard uses the term to refer to urban settlements with cathedrae. However, it is not as specific as it might first appear. The battle which took place outside Soissons in 923 was ultimately instrumental in determining a change of dynasty in the 10th century, and reference to the '*suburbs* of the *urbs*' of Soissons in that year (Lauer 1905, 13; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 8) shows that the perception of the *urbs* could include more than the physical space encompassed by the walls, but included an area outside which pertained to it. The importance of the battle, which required at least some open space, presumably heightened the need to link it to a particular place – but that does not detract from another need to describe an urban community's link to a wider space (see Jourdain-Lombard 1972).

In reference to events in 948 concerning the rivalry between King Louis IV and Hugh the Great, 'Duke of the Franks', *urbs* was again used to describe an area of Soissons, this time in distinction from other areas within an urban space. Despite burning the 'house of the mother church' (*domum matris aecclesiae*), 'canons' cloister and part of the *ciuitas*,' (*claustra canonicorum et partem ciuitas*), Hugh, 'nevertheless not able to capture it, gave up the *urbs*.' (*nec tamen ipsam capere valens, urbem reliquit*) (Lauer 1905, 117; trans. adapted from Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 50). Flodoard's most recent editors suggest that he used *ciuitas* to refer to the 'ecclesiastical quarter' and, in their translation, seem to interpret Hugh's inability to recapture the *ciuitas* rather than the *urbs* as the reason for his departure. Hugh had made his point without worrying about the *ciuitas*, however. His action had been in response to a summons to Laon in the previous year and, presumably, the act by the Bishop of Soissons of committing himself to King Louis IV – the fact that Hugh 'gave up the *urbs*' is probably Flodoard's reading of events in 948 because Hugh did not remain there. Hugh did not need to have taken the entire *urbs*. It is also worth recalling the presence of a Merovingian 'palace' at Soissons, probably used in both Merovingian and Carolingian coronations. Though that site has 'archaeological reflections [which] have proved elusive to date' (Loveluck 2013, 105), it is likely to have been linked to the *ciuitas* of the *urbs*. The (royal) monastic centre of St-Médard (along

with the church of St-Vaast) lay across the River Aisne from the urban centre, on the road to Laon, and had played an important part in Carolingian politics during the 9th century; was this the *ciuitas* which he meant? (Fig. 12.4; for discussion of the evidence, see Brühl 1975, 34–42.) Given Flodoard's sense of terminology, consistency in referring to a wider *urbs* would have included its wider environs (perhaps including the royal monastic centre of St-Médard) rather than just that contained within the urban *enceinte*.

Castrum, *munitio*, and *oppidum* are another set of words which Flodoard seems, at first sight at least, to have used interchangeably, and indeed the vocabulary set which he drew on to describe towns and other fortified communities remained constant for nearly four decades, even if his sense of the meaning of the words may not. It is often difficult to work out whether *castrum* or *munitio* referred to part of a town or all of it. A good case is Château-Thierry, which was besieged in 933–934. Flodoard refers to it as a *castrum* (933) and as a *munitio* (934); in that second year, part of the *oppidum* was taken in an attack while the *arx*, which was 'better protected' (*tutior*), was retained by the *fideles* of the Count of Vermandois (Lauer 1905, 58; trans. adapted from Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 24). Evidently Château-Thierry was – or at least was perceived as – a place with more than one central point; Flodoard's language showed the significance of this: *munitio* and *castrum* were words used to stand for the whole; while there was evidently a settlement – *oppidum* – the strongest element of the fortification is distinguished. By contrast, elsewhere, Flodoard used *oppidum* to refer to the whole urban space, while *castrum* and *munitio*, as well as *turris* – tower – could denote places *within* the urban space.

Different communities also inhabited the urban space. I have discussed elsewhere the disagreements in 11th-century England which seem to be manifestations of divisions among urban communities (Lavelle 2010, 261–262) but Flodoard's terminology often distinguishes between groups of *custodes*, presumably charged with the defence of the town, and the *oppidani*, the inhabitants of the town (*e.g.* referring to St-Quentin in 933; Lauer 1905, 56–57; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 23). Such a distinction is logical but an account of the seizure of Mouzon in AD 930 provides a sense of two distinct groups: the *vassalli* of Boso, nephew of King Raoul, who had been placed in

Mouzon after its seizure by Boso, and the *castellani* who had allowed in Heribert of Vermandois at the instigation of the Mouzonnois (*Mosomenibus*) (Lauer 1905, 46; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 19). Flodoard's choice of *castellani* suggests a group with a specific military function, and although we must be aware of the risk of taking what may have been a rationalisation of events by Flodoard as an indication of what actually happened, such terminology is valuable for the window it provides of the different groups in northern French towns.

The distinction between the readings in the Anglo-Saxon sources and those of Flodoard are not just those of linguistic traditions but reflect differing perceptions of space and actions within that space. The authors who used the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the basis of their Latin histories, the 9th-century biographer of Alfred, Asser, and the 10th-century chronicler, Æthelweard, used similar Latin terminology to that of Flodoard: *arx, castrum*, and – in the case of Æthelweard – *oppidum*. Barbara Yorke (2013, 100–101) comments on the manner in which *arx* was often employed by Æthelweard to refer to a 'more substantial Roman site', places which were *ciuitates* in Asser's account and *ceastra* in the vernacular of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. These were not terms which were used to distinguish *parts* of a fortification (though there is at least recognition of the different types of fortification in the varied vocabulary), suggesting that Flodoard varied the vocabulary in order to enhance narrative details of the use of urban space in a manner that was not necessary in the accounts of 9th-century southern England.[12]

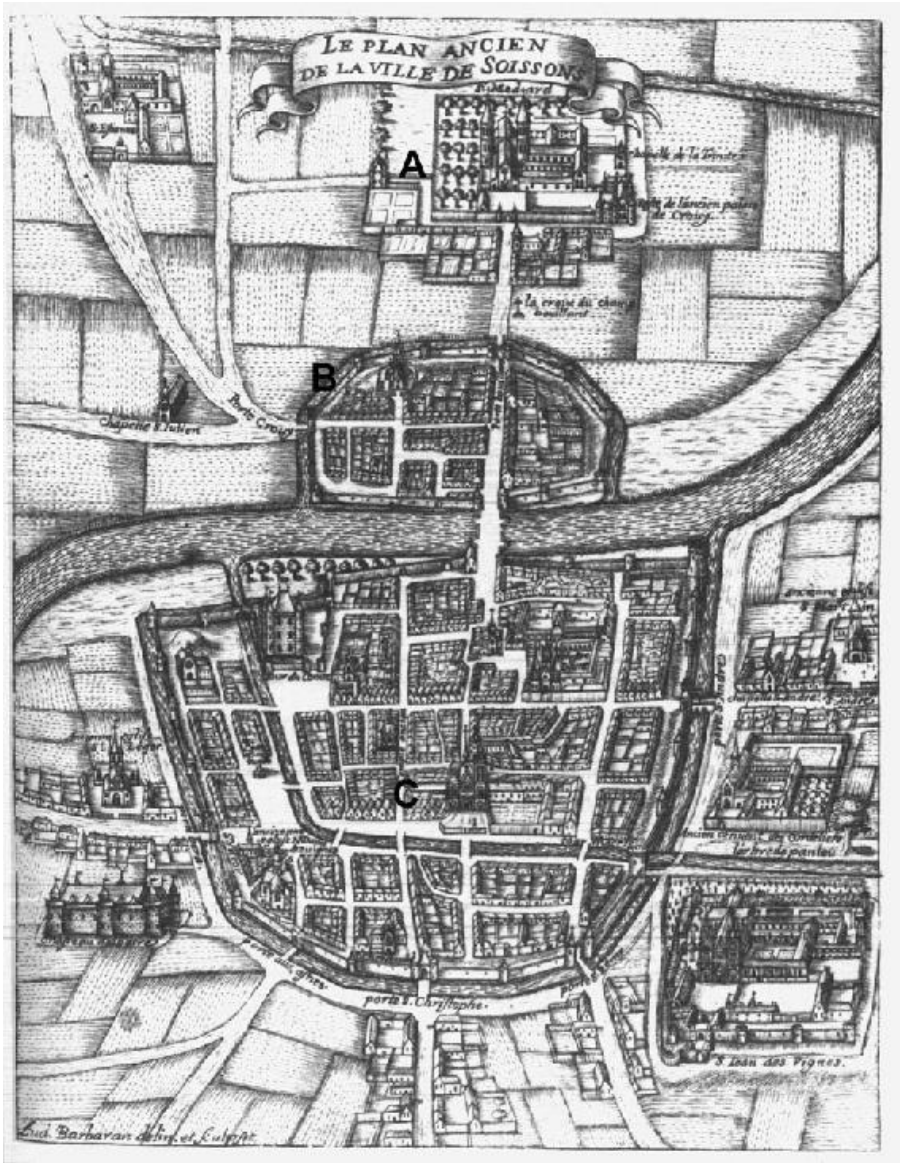

Figure 12.4. Town plan of Soissons (after Dormay 1663, frontispiece). Places noted are (A) Monastery of St Médard and (B) Church of St Vaast, on the Laon side of of the River Aisne; (C) Site of Cathedral.

Urban Space as Contested Space

Much of what has been discussed in this paper so far has been, by its nature, 'contested space'. Actions concerned with contestation could be imposed upon or *from* an urban space, where the urban community itself played a role in resisting authority: (i) those within the urban

space itself could *resist*, with rebellion taking place from within the whole town itself against an outside force or (ii) resistance could be within the town against a force within the urban space or, noting that these issues are not mutually exclusive, (iii) could be a manifestation of the use of the urban space as part of the demonstration of the contestation of power. Below, I hope to show that all three of these forms of contestation could manifest themselves, often at the same time.

I have written elsewhere about how the defiance of the people of Exeter against William the Conqueror in 1068 related to the interests of the urban community there (Lavelle 2010, 257–260; see also Higham 2013). But it is worth considering the town's rebellion in terms of the demonstrative use of the urban space. Exeter's defiance was heightened by the fact that William had blinded a hostage in front of the walls, an act which had evidently stemmed from the original declaration of resistance to the new king, which, in turn, stemmed from its initial submission after the Norman Conquest (Chibnall 1969–80, 2:210–214). According to William of Malmesbury's *History of the Kings of the English* (III.248), at least one Exonian's response to the blinding was crude: a fart issued from the ramparts (Thomson *et al.* 1998, 462–463). William, writing two generations after the events of the Conquest, may have been playing up stereotypes of crudely-behaving Englishmen but the urban demonstration of defiance had precedent on the frontier of the Norman duchy, at a castle linked to the town of Alençon, where, according to William of Jumièges' *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, Duke William enacted a harsh reprisal against those who mocked him (Van Houts 1992–96, 2:122–123). If we can accept that the blinded hostage at Exeter was a local, probably from the urban community itself, the act of defiance was a response to its earlier submission and thus was given extra gravitas. Though the reaction of pulling down breeches and farting in the direction of the enemy may not seem to a 21st-century audience to have been an action of gravitas,[13] there is a serious point in that William of Malmesbury's account recognised that towns were arenas of public action – what might be termed 'demonstrative behaviour' (Barrow 2007). Although a poor counterpoint to Christie's sense of urban pride (see this volume), such use of emotion is instrumental in the function of the town, or at least the perception of its function. The delineation

of urban space thus becomes a physical manifestation of Barbara Rosenwein's definition of an 'emotional community' (Rosenwein 2006; for the political demonstration of emotions, see White 1998).

For a case study of an urban area of action, we can return to Laon. While it is difficult to attribute any significant urban economic function to it in the 10th century (Lusse 1992, 251–252), Laon may have been more important than Paris, London or Winchester as a place of contestation at this time. (In this respect it is interesting that Winchester, much-recorded in the historical records and similar in terms of its legitimising role in early medieval politics, is treated for its typicality on account of its far more extensive archaeological evidence). To this end, this was a reflection of a balance of power in the 10th century. The seizure of Laon was a means of contesting the royal power of Odo in 892 and 895, according to Regino of Prüm (Maclean 2009, 214, 219); thereafter, local commentators, Flodoard and, later, Richer of Reims recorded a whole series of episodes associated with the seizure of the town, in 935, 938, 941, 948, 949 (Lauer 1905, 61, 70, 81–82, 116, 122–123; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 26, 30, 35, 50, 53) and 988 (Lake 2011, 2:231–239), as well as an attempt on the town – abandoned after 'considering the strength of the *castrum* [*consideratque firmitate castrum*]' – in 946 (Lauer 1905, 102; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 44). Laon's power as a central place in the landscape is apparent on approaching the modern city on the N2 Paris–Laon highway, and goes some way to accounting for its importance as a place of Carolingian power, including the consecration of Louis IV (see Lusse 1992, 234–243). A good example of this is the case of the use of Laon by Hugh, the disputed Archbishop of Reims, and the Count of Tours, as a base from which to steal grapes from the surrounding countryside in 948. Such action was more than petty pilfering. While Flodoard was a hostile witness where Archbishop Hugh was concerned (Lecouteux 2010b, 300), given the role of wine in the consecration of French kings in the Middle Ages and the political importance of vines in royal and imperial estates, this action was demonstrative, rather than merely symbolic, of the contestation of authority, specifically *Carolingian* authority.[14]

However, the question of the significance of 'urban status' remains. Where the urban status of Winchester is loudly announced by the urban archaeology (and contrasted with its – until the 12th century at

least – relatively stable position), to what extent did the urban status of Laon determine its political importance? It is difficult to assess this before its communities emerge in 12th- and 13th-century documentation (Saint-Denis 1994), but Laon's status as a political *community* comes long before its 12th-century heyday. In his entry for AD 949, Flodoard begins by recalling the constant loyalty of the people of Laon to King Louis IV but in a cutting note that is belied by his apparently neutral style, he adds that the newly-consecrated bishop – the king's brother – was not allowed back into Laon following his consecration at Reims (Lauer 1905, 121; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 52). Here was the urban community acting as a collective political participant in the late Carolingian body politic. In Flodoard and Richer's accounts, it was more often the townspeople who determined entry to the town than the bishop himself. Refusing entry to the urban space determined political fortunes. To this end, the control of gates was important. Although some allowance should be made for these Reims authors' hostility to Laon bishops on occasion, and no matter how small the population was in the 10th century prior to its later growth (for which see Saint-Denis 1994, 514–522), the collective action of the urban community was evidently what determined the efficacy of urban authority.

On another occasion in 949, King Louis IV and 'secretly' (*latenter*) attacked Laon (Fig. 12.5). Some of Hugh the Great's men remained in a tower associated with the royal *domus* which Louis 'himself' had built at the *castrum* gate – probably at or near what is now the Porte d'Ardon, given its position right by the royal monastery of Notre-Dame-de-St-Jean, a place associated with a *palatium* in a later 10th-century diploma (Lusse 1992, 241–242). Louis's response, building a wall between that tower, also referred to as an *arx*, and the *ciuitas* (perhaps the monastic precincts?) was no mean feat given the commanding position that a tower would have had (ibid., 230, 253). Lusse comments on Hugh's ability to resupply his men in the tower for another year despite the wall (the same 'low walls' recorded by Richer as needing reinforcing in 988? See above, p. 163) but perhaps the pressing need for Louis was to isolate it from the *royal* space in the city. The royal/ducal contestation of urban space had thus developed a third dimension, a verticality, which had hitherto arguably only been occupied by ecclesiastical architecture. Although in many ways a

manifestation of private interests of a lord in an urban space, the tower was, like many castles of this period (Creighton 2012, 47–48), a public space in that it functioned as an indicator of public authority in an urban space. Noting the official function of the late 10th-century tower at Rouen, Le Maho (2000, 73) has commented on the likely influence of the royal tower at Laon on Duke Richard II during his 'semi-captivité' there, at the hands of Louis IV, no less. Perhaps Rouen's tower, on the city walls but not providing the gateway to the city itself, may reflect what was at Laon, meaning that the fortified gateway of the Porte d'Ardon was simply just that, with a more important royal tower nearby, somewhere within the *castrum* but close enough to the walls to form a visual reminder of royal authority from the south of the city. The need for such this would have been very apparent when Louis occupied the city in 938, destroying a stronghold (*arx*) which had been built in 931 by Heribert of Vermandois 'inside Laon itself' (*infra Laudunum ipse*) (Lauer 1905, 51, 70; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 21, 30; Richer II:10 for additional details of the siege engine used: Lake 2011, 2:184–185).

Discussing the location of significant architectural nodes from fragmentary and often unreliable historical sources is fraught with problems, and so the above discussion should not be taken as an attempt to determine the urban geography of Laon. But the town's control by such means was striking, and may fit into a wider pattern of activity. This may have been less to do with a sudden proliferation of tower-building in defended towns than the likelihood that towers were becoming spaces which demonstrated divisions of status – whether royal or lordly – within the urban community.

Moreover, practical factors perhaps played a part, as the seizure of a tower to contest control of a larger urban space even when resources are stretched. To seize a large town without a large army may have been impossible but (covertly) inserting a small contingent of loyal troops into a key tower meant that an opponent's control of the wider town would be compromised, often resulting in a need for a negotiation. In his 950 annal, Flodoard records Hugh the Great's seizure of a tower at Amiens which the men of the Count of Flanders had held since the previous year (Lauer 1905, 121, 127; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 52, 54); Flodoard indicates that this was possible because Hugh's men had occupied another tower in the city during

the same year, arguably during the same campaign. Whether this gave Hugh the edge in the urban campaign is unclear but an incidental detail in Flodoard's description of the siege of the *urbs* of Châlons in 963 (Lauer 1905; Fanning and Bachrach 2004, 67), in which a group of soldiers who had seized a tower during the siege were freed when the town was burnt, may indicate that control of such buildings had become an essential part of strategy.

Conclusion

While the notion that the urban space played a role in the balance of power through the control of nodal points may not be news to readers of this volume, this paper has sought to emphasise the critical role of the population of these urban centres in this balance of power. Towns and their communities were effective, important, and could determine their own fates, though that control was often challenged. A comparison of English and French towns demonstrates the change in power over time. Public authority is apparent in the establishment of urban fortifications in both English and French towns in the 9th century, and it continued to be a point of contention during the 10th and 11th centuries (and beyond). While the day-to-day upkeep of urban defences in terms of the sections of the populations upon whose shoulders that responsibility fell has been given less prominence in this paper (and in the historical sources) than the exigencies of the circumstances in which urban control was challenged, the extreme conditions of such challenges to urban control reveal something of the ways in which towns functioned by virtue of the fortifications associated with them.

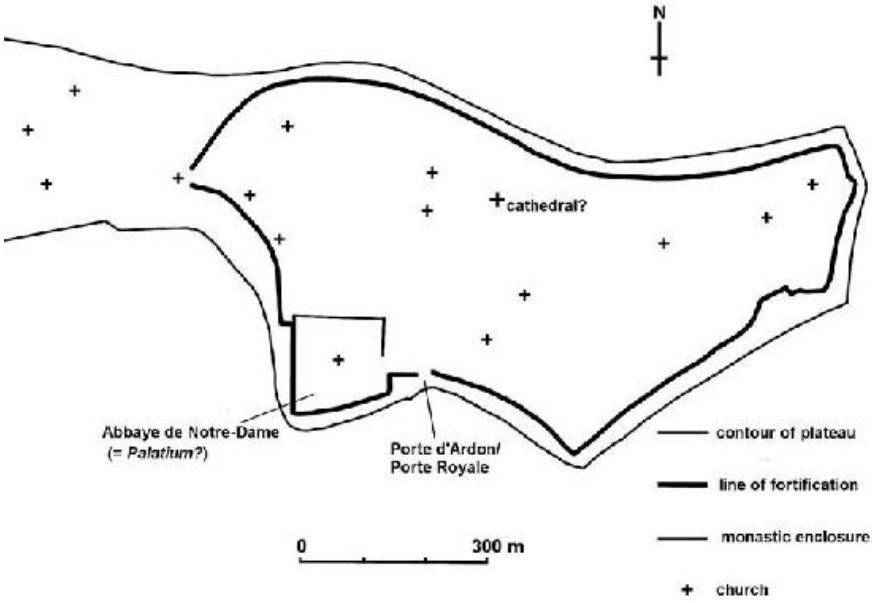

Figure 12.5. Sketch map of the enceinte of the 10th-century castrum of Laon, with the contour of the eastern part of the plateau on which Laon is built (Image redrawn after Lusse 1992, 242; note that the cathedral is marked by the position of the later church).

The comparative approach taken in this paper has also allowed the stereotypes of centripetal/ centrifugal forces associated with royal authority and the consolidation/ fragmentation of the state to be challenged, or at least tempered. In England, long seen by both historians and archaeologists as the preserve of strong state-centred kingship stemming from late Anglo-Saxon royal policies, the extent of contestation of urban spaces shows the limits of royal power as urban communities developed their own collective agendas both before *and* after the Norman Conquest (even if these agendas were unlikely to stem from a collective unity). In France, the urban space could be used to reassert central authority; although of course that central authority could be comital or ducal as often as royal, towns still meant something as central places associated with the assertion of that authority. Urban spaces saw interactions between royal, episcopal, burgess and *popular* authority – exercised at times by consent; at others by contestation – which defined towns as nodal points. Their very defensibility both determined this and cultivated such interactions.

Notes

1 Note that the term 'town' is used here to denote an urban space and its community of any scale, including cities and large metropolitan areas such as London, Rouen and Paris. I have avoided using the term 'city', except in contexts specified by contemporary sources. For notes on different scales of settlement, see Dyer and Lilley 2012.

2 Flodoard also wrote a *History of the Church of Reims* (*Historia Remesis Ecclesiae*), though as those details of political events in Flodoard's lifetime which are in his *Historia Remesis* are taken from his own *Annals* (Sot 1993, 236, 268–270), I have used the latter source to survey the northern French fortifications and towns for this paper.

3 For the non-urban nature of the economy of Laon in the 10th century (a space which was *burh*-like in terms of the occupation of a Roman walled town, if not 'town-like', as it might be seen in the Late Middle Ages or indeed today, in terms of reliance on trade and exchange), see Lusse 1992, 249–252. A useful discussion of what might be seen as an urban space in Anglo-Saxon England and where that interpretation differs from the economic readings of some archaeologists is in Scull 1998.

4 It is apposite to cite two active doctoral theses, those of Jonathan Paletta (University of Cambridge) and of Susan Nightingale (University of Winchester), which are shedding considerable light on the identities and networks of urban communities in English towns around the time of the Norman Conquest.

5 See Hodges 2008, 116, for the comment that 8th-century *emporia* such as Hamwic were treated by rulers with a 'disdain for mercantilism', which may be 'why the written sources rarely mention them'. What distinguished such *emporia* from the kind of 'imperial' walled cities discussed by Bachrach and in this paper is the fact that they were not within walled enclosures; this may then have had a commensurate effect on their political 'meaning'.

6 What Flodoard meant is debatable but these may have been a way of describing the mobility of siege fortifications brought against an enemy rather than large projectile launchers. Richer has a quite nuanced reading of the physics of the construction and movement of a wooden 'war machine' (*machina bellica*) in his account of events at Verdun in 983 (III.105–106 in Lake 2011, 2:182–187). While a 'machine' at Mareuil presumably did not need to be as impressive as the one at Verdun, it is evident that, the classically-inspired imaginations of late Carolingian writers notwithstanding, there was some sophistication involved in siege machine building.

7 *'[F]urtivo capiunt ingressu'* (Lauer 1905, 128) ('by secret entry') suggests that Flodoard referred to the *act* of entering as secret rather than some secret passageway, as implied by Fanning and Bachrach's translation.

8 For a review of the archaeological evidence and consideration of the problems of attributing a date to Rouen's urban renewal, which *may* be as late as the early 10th century, see Lorans 2007. William of Jumieges' *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* IV.6 (Van Houts 1992–6, 1: 108–109) records the rebuilding of Rouen's walls using stone from Norman monasteries by the orders of a Frankish royal

appointee to the duchy, Rodulf *Torta* in the mid-940s, though that is, admittedly, a late historical tradition.

9 Barthélemy (2007, 130) comments on Richer's account of Louis's equestrian demonstration upon his arrival at the beach at Wissant (II.4) as demonstrative of the cavalry culture of the 10th-century West Franks, but given that Louis had been in England since infancy, one might equally remark on this as demonstrative of his English military training.

10 1900 m would equate with a 1500-hide assessment according to the Burghal Hidage formula of one pole of wall (5.5 yards) providing four men from four hides. If we consider that Lusse's figure of 137 villages of 10th-century date in the *pagus* of Laon (albeit with only half of them being of 'existence certaine ou très probable', Lusse 1992, 219–225), this would have required a mean average provision of 11 men from each village for the upkeep of the fortification. This figure compares reasonably well – at least on a purely theoretical level (which does not take into account other, smaller, fortifications in the Laonnois) – with the readings of Anglo-Saxon burghal provisions discussed by Christie, this volume.

11 See Lauer 1905, n. 6 for the discrepancy with Richer's later account (II.41; Lake 2011 2:254–255), which, using some of Flodoard's text, relates the same details to the Breton city of Nantes.

12 It should be noted, however, that Flodoard did not compose his text at a single moment, but that it reflects a development of responses and reactions to the situations in which the author found himself (Lecouteux 2010a; 2010b). Given the changes which took place over a period of nearly 40 years, perhaps *munitiones* within towns became more common, so the meaning of his terminology may have changed to reflect this.

13 Although not considering the Exeter episode, a useful reminder of the range of meanings encompassed by such action – which could be at once both humorous and serious to a medieval audience – is provided by Allen 2007.

14 I have not found reliable evidence for the tradition of the use of *Clos Saint-Rémy* and *Goutte d'Or* wine from the Laonnois in French coronation ceremonies (the texts of which are recorded in Jackson 1995–2000), but there is evidence of the royal status of some Laonnais wines from the 12th century (Doehaerd 1950 for a maximal view; cf. Saint-Denis 1994, 412) and, more generally, the control of vines in royal and imperial estates seems an issue of major political importance; see Lavelle 2012, 64, citing Regino of Prüm s.a. 885 (Maclean 2009, 64), and Doehaerd 1950, 153–154.

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13

Circular, D-Shaped and Other Fortifications in 9th- and 10th-Century Flanders and Zeeland as Markers of the Territorialisation of Power(s)

Dries Tys, Pieterjan Deckers & Barbora Wouters

Introduction

During the 9th and 10th centuries a range of fortifications of circular, D-shaped and other types appeared in the territories of the Low Countries (Fig. 13.1). This phenomenon does not differ from other regions like the Northern Low Countries (Dijkstra and De Ridder 2009; Bartels 2006), northern France (Lançon *et al.* 2015), Lower Saxony (Schesckewitz 2009) or Holstein (Lemm and Wilschewski 2009) and, traditionally, archaeologists and historians have related the appearance of these structures to the historical master narrative of the Viking attacks on the Frankish and Frisian realms. Specifically, the years around AD 880–890 have long been designated as the most likely period for the construction of these fortresses because of the documented campaigns of the Viking Great Army in the Low Countries then. For long also, the groups of circular and D-shaped fortifications were framed in simplistic archaeological typologies, implying that one had to look for homogenous historical events and/or initiatives behind each form (see, for instance, De Meulemeester 1996). Understandably, this somewhat narrow interpretation was readily adopted in other studies because of its attractive but rather simple narrative, acting as a chronological terminus on its own.

However, in this paper we will explore the chronology, landscape and social and political context of these fortifications in a broader and fuller light, using an interdisciplinary archaeological and historical perspective. We will focus especially on the fortresses in the river delta of Schelde and Meuse (region of Zeeland in the present Netherlands) and the neighbouring region of coastal Flanders (in present western Belgium) between the 9th and 10th centuries, since, in the past decade, new excavations have taken place at many of these fortifications, revealing important new data on their origins and contexts.

This paper begins with an overview of how the phenomenon of fortifying sites in the Low Countries evolved from late Roman times. Then we present a summary of accepted narratives, before discussing the range and quality of the archaeological evidence in order to analyse the different categories of fortification across the 9th and 10th centuries AD.

Between the Roman Period and the 9th Century

We can assume that the late Roman/antique period (4th–5th centuries AD) was the last before the 9th century to be characterised by the large-scale construction and/or maintenance of defensive structures. In that period, the walls of Roman towns like Tongeren, Bavay and Tournai were enforced with new stone curtains, and a number of new Roman forts were erected or renovated, including Oudenburg and Aardenburg in coastal Flanders (Verhulst 1999, 1–21; Vanhoutte 2009).

Today, we know that over the following centuries the idea of a Roman society/culture survived in Western Europe, and it is not surprising that many fortresses were retained if only for ideological reasons (Lançon *et al*. 2015). Thus, in the *castella* of Oudenburg and Aardenburg a kind of central place function endured, with both presumably the assembly places and centres of their *pagi*, respectively the *pagus Flandrensis* and the *pagus Rodanensis* (Hollevoet 2011). Oudenburg was called the *municipium Flandrensis*, which indicates a walled settlement, most likely signifying the ancient Roman stone defences. However, it is uncertain to what extent the defensive walls of these old Roman forts remained fully functional into the 9th century. Despite the obvious strategic value of their locations and

their place-names of *-burg* type (first attested in 866 and *c*. 800 respectively), one could argue that these forts or defended foci did not belong to a co-ordinated military system as had existed in their antique past (Vanhoutte 2009; Hollevoet 2011).

In general, however, it seems that settlements with central functions, be they economic, social or other, were not always protected by noteworthy defensive works. On the contrary, most Merovingian settlements and ports appear to have had a distinctly dispersed and undefended character. Despite internal upheavals in the Frankish world, the 6th to 8th centuries AD are overall considered a fairly peaceful period with neither central nor systematic military initiatives, nor the kinds of tensions that would necessitate the fortification of the dispersed settlements. Groups of armed retainers and horsemen surrounding charismatic chiefs and landowners appear instead to have sustained an equilibrium between their positions under the rule of the (militarily weak) kings (Halsall 2003, 219).

A Standard Historical Narrative: Defences against the Vikings

The group of circular fortresses on the isles of Zeeland and in the coastal plain in Flanders have been the object of many studies because of their clear imprint on the landscape and their apparent relation with Danish circular forts like Trelleborg, Fyrkat and Aggersborg (Roesdahl and Sindbaek 2014). Their origin is almost automatically brought in relation with later 9th-century Viking raids in the Low Countries. We can briefly review this historical image. First of all, it is important to consider that prior to AD 879, conflicts were 'limited' to attacks or raids by different, small warbands with different purposes, while trade with Scandinavia continued (D'Haenens 1967; Tys and Wouters in press; Deckers 2014). The first Danish attacks of presumed larger scale are recorded in 810. Written accounts reveal how Charlemagne and his administration reacted by organising a coastal defence system, including ships and *praesidia* (small defensive structures, perhaps towers) to guard traffic, trade and settlements (see Henderikx 1995, 82). In a letter from 834, Einhard confirms the existence of *custodia maritima* in the region under discussion (see D'Haenens 1967, 108). As Henderikx (1995, 83) suggests, we have to

keep in mind that in the same period Charlemagne was very actively supporting the members of the Halfdan clan in their struggles for the Danish throne. In fact, Danish lords, warlords and their warbands were present at the Frankish court between 807 and 875, which indicates that not all contacts with Danes were hostile and that a number of Danish attacks might be regarded as retaliations in the context of Carolingian interference.

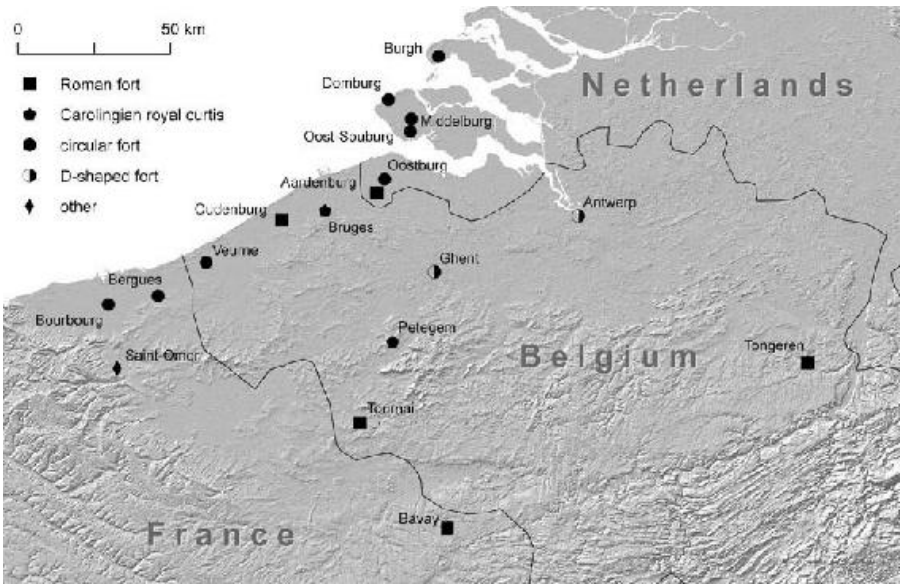

Figure 13.1. Map with all the sites mentioned in the text (Image by the authors).

Additionally, between 840 and 875 the Danish chiefs Harald and Rorik held positions in the military and feudal structures of the Low Countries, supporting the Carolingian emperors Lothar, and later Charles the Bald and Louis the Fat (Coupland 1998). The least one can say is that Frankish relations with Danish lords were much more complicated than the traditional image suggests. Danish lords like Hemming and Rorik even contributed to the defence of the coasts and rivers (Henderikx 1995, 88, Coupland 1998, 87–88, 95–101; Tys and Wouters in press); conceivably they controlled traffic on the River Schelde and had influence in the 9th-century port of trade in Antwerp (Fig. 13.1).

It is only when a large part of the Great Viking Army crossed the Channel in 879, perhaps as a result of the conditions of the peace treaties between the Danes and Wessex, that the relations with the Franks became hostile and violent for over a decade. Written sources

recount how the Great Viking Army raided and plundered Frankish central places, towns and palaces until AD 891 (D'Haenens 1967). Out of 11 known written attestations on Viking massacres in the area of present Belgium, only one does not refer to this period. During this period, Viking campaigns were organised from so-called 'winter camps' which acted as their stores and military bases. As yet, none of these winter camps, one of which lay near or inside Ghent, are archaeologically attested, although some recent indications suggest that we should be seeking river-based camps of similar structure and concept as at Torksey in Lincolnshire, England (Hadley and Richards 2013, http://www.archaeology.co.uk/articles/viking-torksey-inside-the-great-armys-winter-camp.htm).

So, when did the ringforts of coastal Flanders and Zeeland become connected with this particularly violent period in our history? This standard narrative was developed during the past half-century, its roots being consolidated by 1965, when van Werveke published his synthesis on the 'oldest forts on the Flemish and Zeeland coast', relying on both historical-geographical and historical evidence (earlier treatments of the forts include Pirenne 1939, 123–141; Braat 1941; Dhondt 1942, 78–87; Huizinga 1948). Van Werveke noted the strong similarities in circular topographical patterns of a number of towns along the coast of northern France, Flanders and Zeeland, notably Bourbourg, Bergues, Veurne, Oostburg, Domburg, Middelburg, Oost-Souburg and Burgh (Figure 13.1). He concluded that these were the remains of circular fortifications, and posited that they formed part of a co-ordinated coastal defence against the Vikings. His arguments for this interpretation were: the comparable layout and size of the forts (diameters of 200–320 m); a constant distance of *c*. 20 km between forts (with the Roman forts and Oudenburg and Aardenburg plugging the gap between Veurne and Oostburg); and the common recurrence of the place-name generic element 'burg'. Furthermore, van Werveke identified these forts with the *castella recens facta*, or 'recently built fortifications', attacked by a group of Vikings in the coastal area in 891, as recorded in the *Libellus miraculorum sancti Bertini* (see Wattenbach 1887, 512). Thus, the forts emerged in the scholarly field as a singular site type, coherent and compact in date and of fixed purpose (i.e. coastal defence against the Vikings).

These core elements of van Werveke's interpretation have

remained largely unchallenged until recently and paved the way for the further expansion of the ringfort narrative, this time through archaeological research. In 1995, the important volume *Vroegmiddeleeuwse ringwalburgen in Zeeland* was published (van Heeringen *et al.* 1995), providing an overview of the state of knowledge of the five Zeeland ringforts, in particular based on excavations. The most expansive of these excavations (amounting to *c.* 40% of the fort area) was conducted in 1970 and in the early 1980s at Oost-Souburgh. Because excavation at other forts had been limited to small-scale interventions, usually trial trenches to confirm the location of the outer wall and moat, only the Oost-Souburg results had yielded any detailed insights into the occupation sequence. In essence, these revealed that the fort was built on previously unoccupied land and that three subsequent phases could be discerned (van Heeringen 1995b, 23):

1. Following construction of the fort in the late 9th century, it seemingly lay unoccupied for some time, but likely served as temporary refuge during attacks;
2. A main occupation phase in the 10th century;
3. A phase of reduced activity of a more rural nature in the 11th–12th centuries, followed by final abandonment.

The perspective of the ringforts as a singular site category has resulted in the extrapolation of the Oost-Souburg occupation sequence to other ringforts in Zeeland (van Heeringen 1995a, 56; van Dierendonck 2009, 257) and further south (regarding them primarily as refuge forts – *e.g.* De Meulemeester 1996, 379–381).

Reconsidering the *castella recens facta*

A re-evaluation of the current discourse, notably by Ten Harkel (2011; 2013) and Deckers (2014, 96–114), as well as more recent and targeted archaeological research, has identified a number of problems with this standard narrative surrounding the ringfort categorisation.

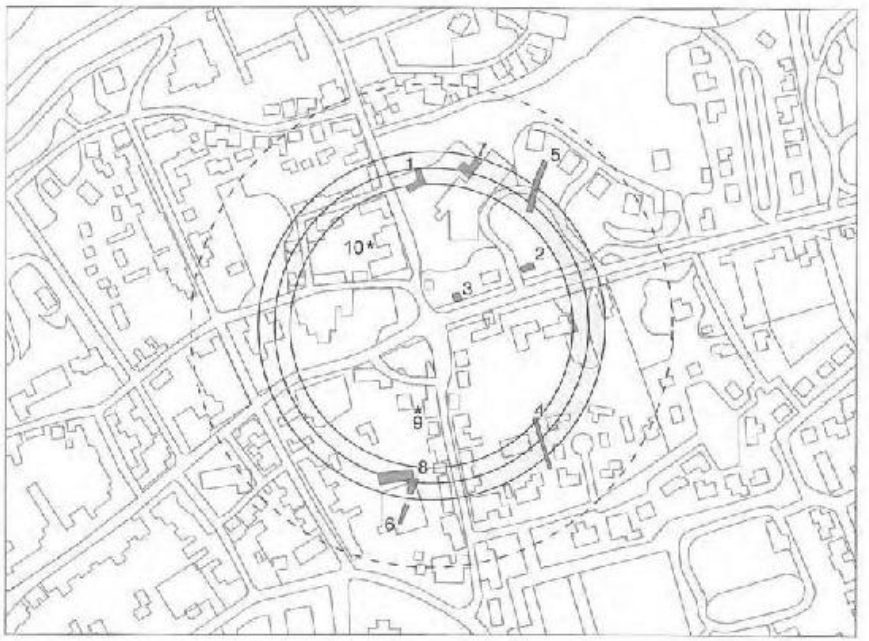

Figure 13.2. Plan of the fortification in Domburg based on archaeological results (Van Dierendonck 2009, figure 9).

Firstly, the historical and historical-geographical evidence underpinning this can be challenged. Most importantly, the identification of the coastal forts as the *castella recens facta* of AD 891 can be questioned. We know, for example, that the *Libellus Miraculorum Sancti Bertini* relates two phases of fortification around the abbey of St. Bertin at Saint-Omer. The first, started around AD 880 and of unknown size and shape, remained unfinished until at least 895, and possibly as late as 918 (see Guérard 1841, 126, 139; Wattenbach 1887, 513; van Werveke 1963, 1066; Derville 1995, 29, 35). The chapter of St. Omer, higher up the hill, was set within a smaller *castellum*, supposedly built between 881 and 891 (when it withstood a recorded Viking attack). De Meulemeester identified a circular structure in the town's topography (1981, 26–27), although in reality the fort's roughly semi-circular shape appears to have been dictated more by the natural topography. Thus, while it is not impossible that the author of the *Libellus* did include one or more ringforts near Saint-Omer (*e.g.* Bergues, Bourbourg and Veurne), fortifications of other types may also have been intended. A one-on-one relationship between the ringforts as such and the *castella recens*

facta is highly unlikely and the date of AD 891 cannot be retained as a strict chronological *terminus* for the construction of the ringforts.

Early scholars proposed that the forts were built as a defensive line against Viking attack on the initiative of the Count of Flanders (*e.g.* Pirenne 1939, 127; Dhondt 1942, 83; van Werveke 1963, 1089; van Werveke 1965, 5–6, 18). However, insular Zeeland belonged to a different polity; in fact, the first count of Flanders to occupy Zeeland was Baldwin IV, who ruled between 988 and 1035. Furthermore, it can be argued that a coastal line of defence would have been of limited effectiveness against the Great Viking Army between AD 879 and 892, since its forces travelled by land and rivers in the interior of Francia and did not act from the sea nor did they strongly target that (cf. the overland attack on the 'Flemish' from Condé in 883: see D'Haenens 1967, 53). In fact, it can be observed that the coastal plain appears to have been mostly spared from Viking assaults. The idea that a co-ordinated scheme formed the basis of some of the ringforts cannot be wholly rejected given their similar forms, but positive evidence is scarce. However, in a circular argument the forts themselves are sometimes presented as evidence for the severity of the Viking threat (*e.g.* Henderikx 1995, 94, 99).

Ringforts

Arguably, the circular shape and basic layout shared by the coastal ringforts were the major reasons behind their treatment as a single site category. This is not without problems. When building a rampart to protect a terrain, the circle is the simplest and most economical form conceivable, requiring the shortest wall length in proportion to the enclosed area (Cools 1994, 104). Contemporary ringforts can be found elsewhere in the Low Countries, notably at Rijnsburg, Den Burg and Vlaardingen (Dijkstra and De Ridder 2009; Dijkstra 2011, 127–128) and at Zutphen. That ringforts are rarer along the Rhine-Meuse delta and further inland is likely due to the presence of Roman fortifications which could be refurbished (Dijkstra and De Ridder 2009, 215). Evidently, the morphological criterion alone used to consider the forts of coastal Flanders and Zeeland as a single group cannot retain validity in light of the existence of similar forts further away. Rather, the circular shape could be viewed as an adaptation to the specificity of the local terrain, as for the well-known semi-circular 'D-shaped'

fortifications from the same period (Haithabu and others; see below).

Figure 13.3. Aerial photograph from 1944 of the fortification of Oost-Souburg (Van Heeringen 1995c, figure 73).

Even within the coastal group under consideration here, some variety can be noted (Ten Harkel 2013, 249–250): the forts vary in diameter from 265 m (Domburg – see Fig. 13.2) to 144 m (Oost-Souburg – Fig. 13.3); and Oost-Souburg features an uncharacteristically narrow moat. Additionally, the building method of ramparts is variable (though knowledge of this aspect of the forts is too often based on just a single section): thus a construction using small stakes appears to have been employed to fortify the outer side of

the rampart at Domburg, while at other forts turves were used for this purpose (van Heeringen 1995b, 31); at Burgh, a row of thin stakes, 50 cm apart, lined the inside of the wall (van Heeringen 1995b, 34–35); and in contrast to the Zeeland forts, Veurne, the only archaeologically studied fort of the Flemish group, has a double rampart, which was subsequently filled to form a single wall (Lehouck 2001, 55). The internal layout of the forts varied as well: whereas both Oost-Souburg and Domburg (van Heeringen 1995c, 126) featured two crossing roads dividing the forts into quadrants, at Middelburg there are no indications that an E–W road ever existed (Fig. 13.4).

Chronologically as well, the archaeological evidence allows for a more diverse picture than that determined by the historical *terminus* of AD 891. Radiocarbon dates from the five forts in Zeeland (van Heeringen 1995b, 36–39 with Table 1) offer an absolute chronological framework that has hitherto served to support this historical dating. However, this argument does not survive close scrutiny: at a 2-sigma level, the calibrated dates collectively range between the later 9th and the end of the 10th century, and often appear to favour the later 9th century only because of the steep slope of the calibration curve at this point (cf. McFadgen *et al.* 1994, 225–230). Additionally, few of the dated materials can be directly linked to the initial construction phase of the wall. Only at Domburg, a relatively precise date from the middle to the third quarter of the 9th century can be proposed based on the dendrochronological date of a coffin made from re-used ship timber (AD 833–849) found immediately beneath and partly within the rampart (van Heeringen 1993, 191–194; van Heeringen 1995b, 31), as well as the presence of Badorf-type pottery on the surface beneath the rampart (van Heeringen 1992, 120–121).

These morphological and chronological features subvert the unity of design and purpose long ascribed to the ringforts; the biographies of these forts are to be understood on their own terms, not within the framework of an overarching narrative. In addition, earlier statements in relation to the occupation sequence of Oost-Souburg, which were subsequently extrapolated to all ringforts, should be treated with caution. Close reading of the published excavation report (*e.g.* van Heeringen 1995b, 23; 1995c, 126–127) reveals that the existence of an ‘empty’ phase is primarily based on the discrepancy between the assumed date of construction of the rampart (as shown above, based

on a flawed historical argument) and the earliest observed occupation in the early 10th century. The deposition of a supposed layer of clean sand beneath the occupation layers, viewed by van Heeringen as marking the end of the 'refuge phase' (1995c, 141), could just as likely denote a stage in the building routine of the fort. Small 10th-century terps in the region were sometimes built in a similar fashion, beginning with a small ring-shaped embankment of clay turves subsequently filled with sand (as traced at Abbekinderen and Buttinge: see Trimpe Burger 1958, 123–139; van Heeringen 1995a, 57; Vos and van Heeringen 1997, 35).

Excavations at the Badstraat site in Domburg, in the north-western quadrant of the fort, brought to light a late 9th-/early 10th-century occupation level featuring five houses overlying a 1.7 m deep stratification of peaty, sandy and clayey layers. These testify to a long period of intensive activity within the fort. A revision of the stratigraphy of previous excavations has revealed the same deep stratification (Ufkes 2011, 14; Deckers 2014, 385–386). Revising and combining the stratigraphies generates a new picture of the earliest occupation. Crucially, at one site, the rampart overlies these layers, proving that they predate the construction of the fort in the second half of the 9th century (van Heeringen 1994; Deckers 2014, 386). This resolves several problematic dendrochronological and radiocarbon dates of objects found within the occupation layers that appeared to be too old to be related to the supposedly late 9th-century fort (for the most recent recalibrations: Ufkes 2011, Table 2.6). A *terminus post quem* for the onset of this occupation is provided by scientific dates from several burials cut into the natural surface beneath the wall and occupation layers. These show that intensive occupation may have begun as early as the late 7th or early 8th century (Ufkes 2011, 19; Deckers 2014, 384). This renders the earliest occupation of the fort area contemporary with the *wic* of Walichrum near Domburg (Henderikx 1995). The latter site, known archaeologically from numerous antiquarian observations and finds on the nearby beach, has recently been demonstrated to have fallen into decline only in the 11th century rather than the late 9th century as previously assumed (Deckers 2014). The *wic*'s relationship with the nearby fort, usually seen as its defended successor, therefore needs re-assessment.

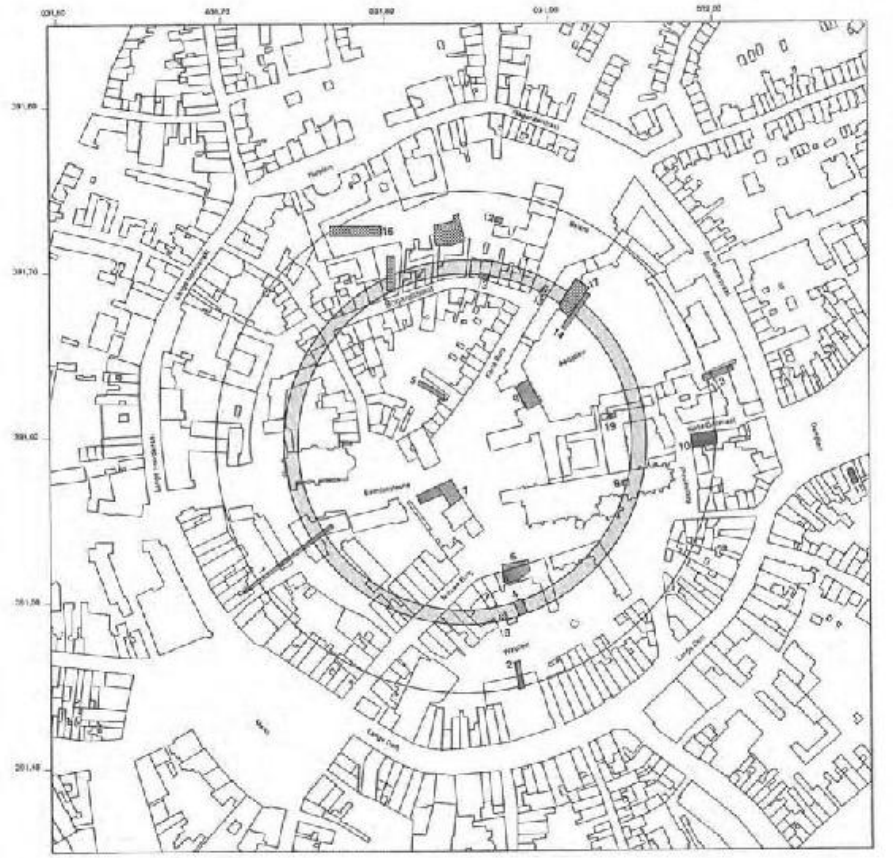

Figure 13.4. Plan of the fortification in Middelburg based on archaeological results (Van Dierendonck 2009, figure 6).

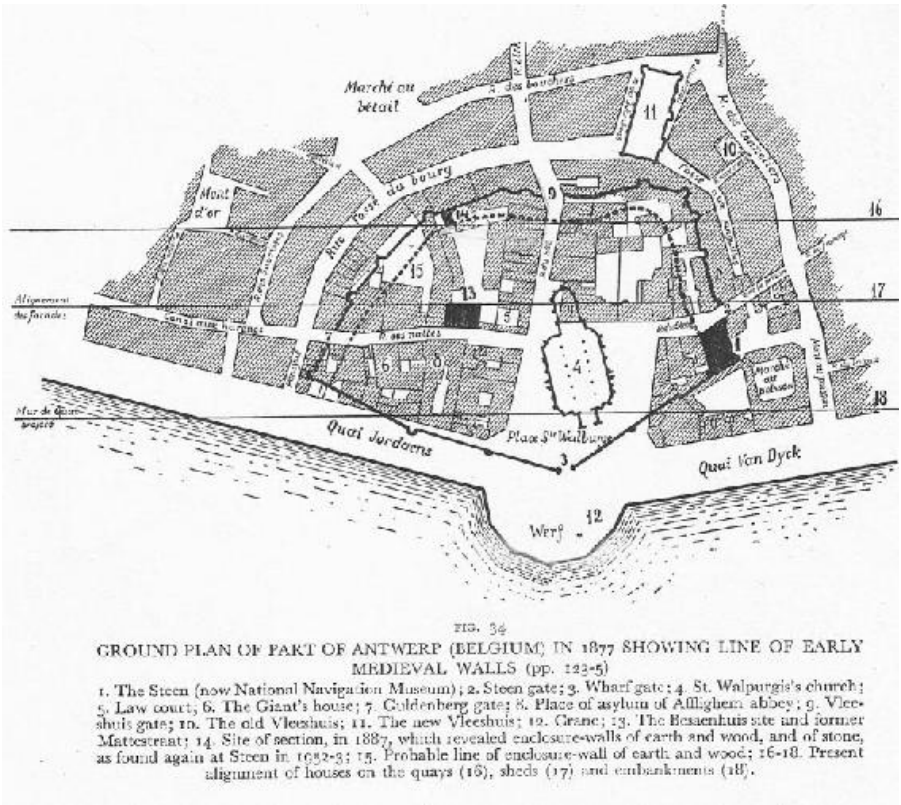

FIG. 34

GROUND PLAN OF PART OF ANTWERP (BELGIUM) IN 1877 SHOWING LINE OF EARLY MEDIEVAL WALLS (pp. 123-5)

1. The Steen (now National Navigation Museum); 2. Steen gate; 3. Wharf gate; 4. St. Walpurgis's church; 5. Law court; 6. The Giant's house; 7. Guldenberg gate; 8. Place of asylum of Affligem abbey; 9. Vleeshuis gate; 10. The old Vleeshuis; 11. The new Vleeshuis; 12. Crane; 13. The Besaenhuis site and former Mattestraat; 14. Site of section, in 1887, which revealed enclosure-walls of earth and wood, and of stone, as found again at Steen in 1952-3; 15. Probable line of enclosure-wall of earth and wood; 16-18. Present alignment of houses on the quays (16), sheds (17) and embankments (18).

Figure 13.5. Reconstruction of the D-shaped fortification of Antwerp (Image from Van De Walle 1961, 124). Important features are the earthen rampart (no. 15) that was replaced by a stone wall from which the oldest form dates from the early 11th century. 'Steen' (1) is an elitarian dwelling incorporated in the stone wall. The St.-Walburgis church (4) is the successor of a late 10th-century chapel inside the fortification that can be related to the transformation of the trade settlement into an Ottonian-period fortress.

Combined, these critical remarks and new insights undermine the historically biased, generalising narrative that has hitherto surrounded the coastal ringforts. Some aspects of this narrative can be decisively rejected, in particular the implicit but central assumption that all forts had a similar design and occupation history. As seen, a focus on the archaeological evidence, notably regarding construction dates, highlights the uncertainty and ambiguity of current knowledge and aspects that were insufficiently heeded in the traditional approach.

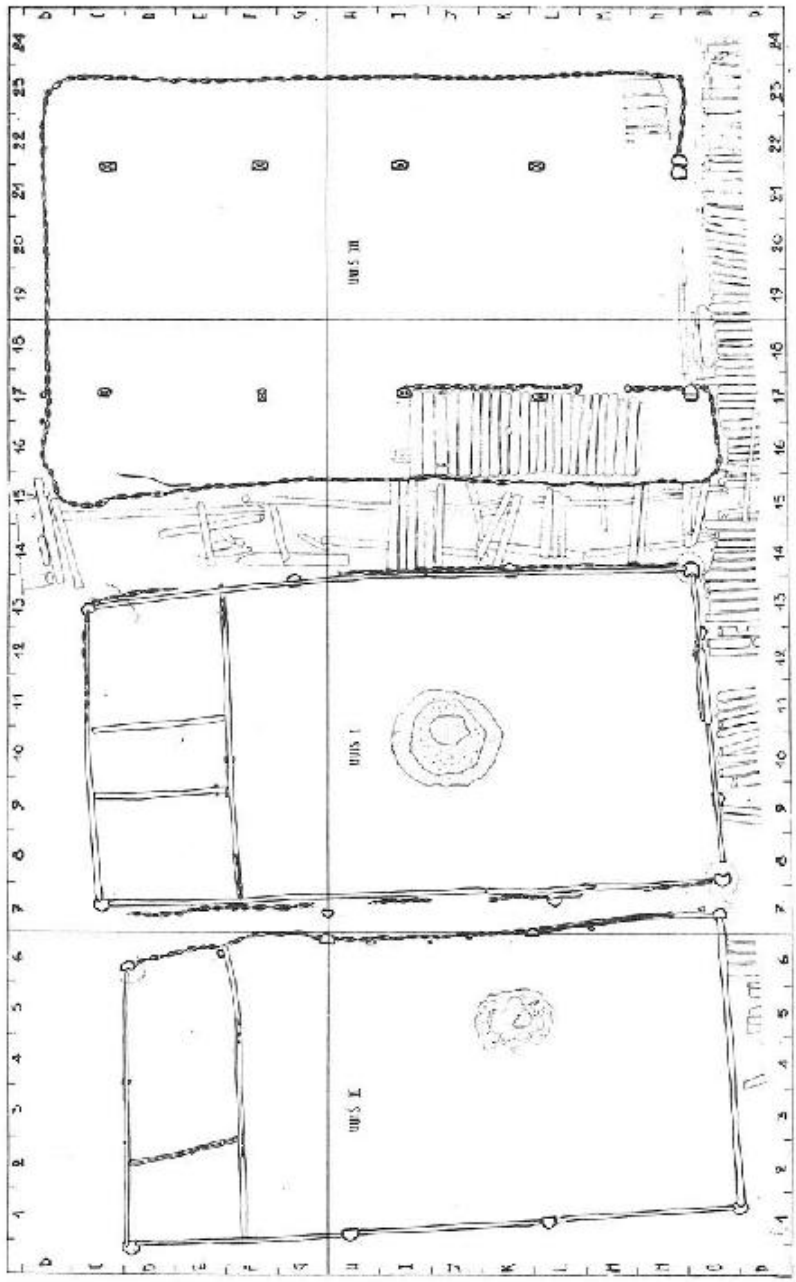

Figure 13.6. The wooden house platforms and trackways of the Mattestraat in the 9th- to 10th-century trade settlement in Antwerp, as excavated by A. L. J. Van De Walle (1961, 128). The site can be found on Figure 13.5 as no. 13.

D-Shaped Fortifications

Not only can the coastal ringforts be related to the 9th and 10th centuries: a range of different types of fortifications gather in the same period, notwithstanding discussions over chronology. The most impressive of these are the D-shaped fortifications traced in the trade settlements of Ghent and Antwerp, both of which became large towns in the late medieval period (Figure 13.1). Henderikx (1995, 101) and others have suggested that these first fortifications were part of the Carolingian defence system, but a lack of sound archaeological data has hindered discussion.

The core of the present town of Antwerp is a D-shaped area of at least 2 hectares called 'De Burg' (Fig. 13.5), parts of which were probably inundated by the River Schelde between the 9th century and the construction of the late medieval waterfront. The *Burg* refers to a late 10th-century Ottonian fortress (*Andoouerpis castro*, 980 – see Gysseling and Koch 1950, 242) that was occupied by an imperial representative, the *Markgraaf* (Verhulst 1978). The fortification comprised a stone wall and a wide moat called '*Burchtgracht*'. 19th- and 20th-century excavations have revealed that an earthwork preceded the D-shaped circuit (Van De Walle 1961, 126; Veeckman 2009, fig 5), featuring an earth rampart with a wooden palisade; according to Van De Walle, this rampart was 11 m wide at its base and at least 6.0 m high. The earthwork was dated to the second half of the 9th century based on the presence of red painted pottery and parallels with Scandinavian settlements, notably Haithabu, Birka and Novgorod (Van De Walle 1961, 126). The earthen rampart has seen re-examination in recent excavations (2008–2009): it was shown as 13.5 m wide and *c*. 4.0 m high, and radiocarbon results, stratigraphic analysis and OSL dating set its construction to *c*. AD 900 (Bellens *et al*. 2012, 15).

The fortification protected a trade settlement that appears to be older than the rampart. Inside and around the area of the D-shaped core of the present town, impressive traces were found of a 9th- to 10th-century port or trading settlement with a distinctly urban character. Both the excavations of 2008–2009 and particularly those by Van De Walle between 1952 and 1961 have identified wooden houses between 5.0–6.5 m wide and 12–13 m long surrounded by wattle fences, oriented onto wooden trackways (Van de Walle 1961; Oakley 2011; Bellens *et al*. 2012) (Fig. 13.6). This trading settlement

had a complex and long occupation sequence: the earliest buildings were constructed in wood and probably dated to the 9th century, but significant unexcavated structures and deposits also lay below these buildings. Radiocarbon samples collected during the 2008–2009 campaign showed that the wooden trackway had a possible chronological range of AD 780–905 (KIK 6215, KIK 6203, KIK 6257; Bellens *et al*. 2012), while a wattle wall was dated to AD 680–880. This implies that, already in the 9th century, the wooden port in and around the Burg area was densely inhabited with craft production (leather, antler and combs, textiles and wool, metal artefacts) and trade of the same types of pottery as found in Dorestad (notably Badorf wares, *Reliëfband* amphorae, red painted wares including *Hunneschans* ware) (Oakley 2011).

The resemblance with the structures and urban layout of ports like Birka, Haithabu and Dublin, to name just three, is striking (see Clarke and Ambrosiani 1995). Van de Walle (1961, 127) had already suggested a link with the Scandinavian world, but without radiocarbon-dated sequences he was unable to prove this. The historical records, however, present an interesting context, which suggests that 9th-century Antwerp was indeed involved in Scandinavian activities in the Low Countries in this period. Antwerp was already by 640 a central place with a mint called *Anderpus* (Verhulst 1978). Viking raiders looted Antwerp in 836 according to the *Annales Fuldenses* (as discussed in Verhulst 1978 and 1987). The location of this early medieval settlement is archaeologically unknown. Noticeably, the wooden trade settlement from the 9th century was built on older, arable soils (Devos *et al.* 2013). Most remarkably, the written sources remain silent about Antwerp between 836 and 950, by which time it is called a *vicus*. Additionally, the extensive written accounts of the campaigning of the Great Viking Army of 879–891 make no mention of the fortified settlement of Antwerp, unlike many other places and settlements (Bartels 2006, 193 and n. 293). The contemporaneous Danish control over the Schelde estuary under the rule of Rorik and others (see above) prompts the idea that Antwerp was connected in some way or another with the Scandinavian world (see also Henderikx 1995, 87–88; Tys 2010; Tys and Wouters in press). The earthen wall suggests that this specific settlement was threatened in the late 9th/early 10th century.

9th-century Ghent was a polyfocal settlement on the left bank of the River Schelde in inland Flanders (Declercq and Laleman 2010) (Fig. 13.7). Its core was an old Merovingian assembly place, *Ganda*, where counts and freemen gathered to discuss judicial affairs (Verhulst 2002, 38–39). Around AD 640, missionaries visited the place in order to bring it under official royal control, after which two abbeys were founded. The wealth of these abbeys, the presence of a toll and the naming of *Ganda* as a *municipium* point to an important and rich central place involved in trade and artisanal production (Verhulst 1999, 38–39). Before the 9th century, a second settlement developed south of the first, around the present St.-Baafs Cathedral. C14 dates from a number of excavations (not fully published) indicate that this second settlement originated in the second half of the 8th century at the latest and developed into a *portus* or trade settlement (Laleman and Stoops 1996. Radiocarbon dates KIK 824, KIK 7056 and KIK 7057 from this area are 8th- to early 9th-century determinations). This second settlement was protected by (at least) a semi-circular moat 14 m wide and 3.0 m deep (Raveschot 1990). The moat had a length of *c*. 700 m, encircling a zone of 6.6 ha (Bartels 2006, 194). C14 data suggest its construction in a broad chronological timespan between the 8th and 9th century, although the ceramics tend to exclude the 8th century (Raverschot 1990). At present, no archaeological evidence exists of the settlement inside the D-shaped area except the old Sint-Janschurch that must date back to at least the first half of the 10th century (Verhulst and Declercq 1989, 51). Although this remains under discussion, the semi-circular moated trade settlement may have been the *castrum Gandavum* noted in texts in the mid-9th century (ibid., 47). 9th-century Ghent was clearly connected to Carolingian central powers, as testified by the fact that Charlemagne visited Ghent in person to inspect the construction of a fleet of ships in 811, and Charles the Bald installed a mint for silver denarii in *Gandavum* between 864 and 875 (see Declercq and Laleman 2010, 40).

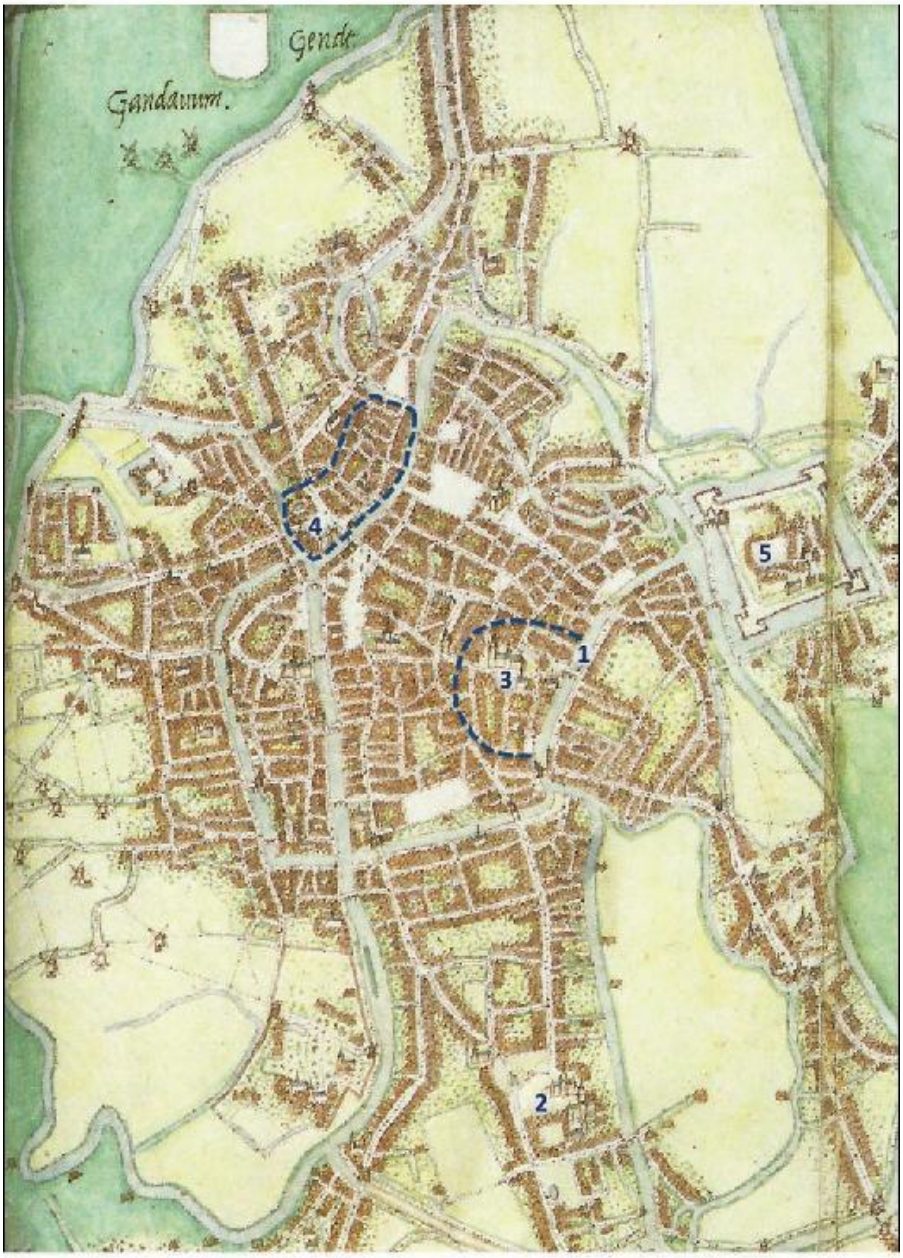

Figure 13.7. Reconstruction of the D-shaped fortification of Ghent on the 16th-century map of the town by Jacob Van Deventer (c. 1550) (Image after Raveschot 1990 and Verhulst 1999). 1. Pattern of the semi-circular moat and wall that remained visible in the street pattern of 16th-century Ghent, probably the trade site called Gandavum. 2. Saint-Peter's Abbey, founded c. AD 640 and one of the the oldest monasteries in the Low Countries. 3. 10th-century collegiate Saint-John's church built inside the D-shape (the present Cathedral of Ghent) 4. Novum castellum or Burg-site developed by the Counts of

Flanders in the second half of the 10th century, the present Oudburg quarter with the 12th-century Gravensteen, 5. The oldest core of Ghent, called Ganda (terminus ante quem AD 640), where the Abbey of Saint-Bavo was built in the second half of the 7th century. In the mid-16th century the site was transformed into a citadel.

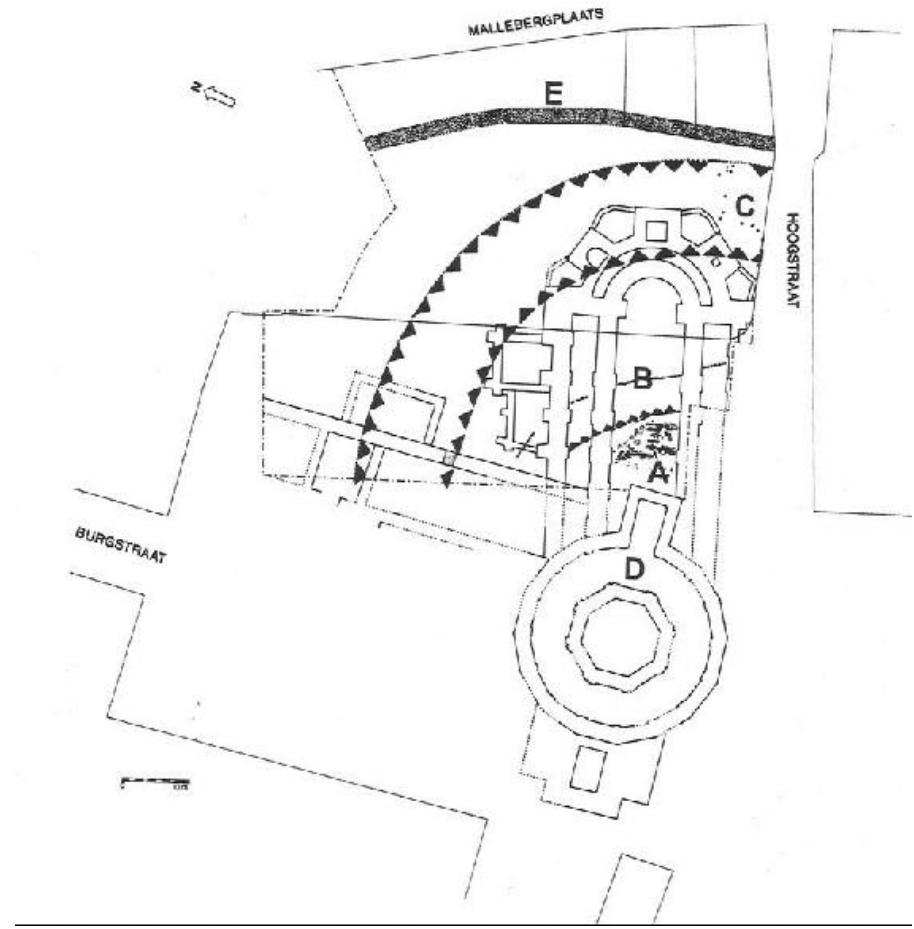

Figure 13.8. Excavation plan of the north-west corner of the fortress that lay at the root of Bruges (Image after De Witte 2011, 80). A and B represent the wall and palisade of the mid-10th century; C is the moat around the fortification; D is the comital collegiate church constructed in the second half of the 10th century inside the palace of Bruges; and E is the 11th-century chalk-built wall that replaced the old fortification works A, B and C.

However, the rich port and abbeys of Ghent inevitably also attracted Viking warbands, and at least one of the abbeys (Saint-Baafsabdij) was attacked in 851, after which the monks fled to Laon in France, only to return in 864. Between 879 and 881/883 Ghent became one of the documented winter-camps of the Great Viking Army in the Low Countries. Written data suggest that they controlled

the town, but it remains unclear to what extent the D-shaped fortification nearby can be associated with this camp. The Great Army also used Ghent as a place to repair ships in 881 (Verhulst and Declercq 1989, 53). There are clear indications that Ghent revived shortly afterwards and in the 10th century developed into an important town for trade and textile production and became a seat of comital power. In the course of the 10th century, the semi-circular ditch disappeared due to the site's growing urbanisation. While this D-shaped fortification can indeed be related to a very unstable period in the development of Ghent, without further archaeological information we must remain uncertain whether it was a Carolingian, Scandinavian or else a local initiative.

Smaller Fortifications

Finally, a number of smaller fortifications that may relate to elite settlements or were designed as (smaller) royal fortresses at strategic places should also be discussed here. The best known of these is Bruges, which originated as small semi-circular fortified settlement on a sandy outcrop in the alluvium of a smaller river at the place where the same river (Reie) entered the coastal saltmarshes of Flanders (Hillewaert *et al*. 2011) (Fig. 13.8). First mentioned as *Bruggis* in a source from AD 851–864, Bruges served as a mint under Charles the Bald between 864–875, which is considered further proof for its fortified state then (Declercq 1988; 1991, 30–31; 2011, 129–130). In addition, the fact that Bruges was a stronghold for the Flemish Count Baldwin II in 892 and was transformed into a prestigious fortified comital palace shortly after 950, indicates that Bruges probably originated as a (smaller) Carolingian royal fortress in the mid-9th century. However, archaeology has so far not revealed any of the fortification works. Of high interest are the layers used to prepare the ground for the 10th-century fortress which included large amounts of imported ceramics (including Badorf ware, Reliëfband amphorae, red painted wares and glazed wares from the Meuse Valley), an antler comb of Baltic origin, metal artefacts and crucibles (Verhaeghe and Hillewaert 1991; Ervynck and Hillewaert 1991). These clearly attest trade activities in the immediate surroundings of the first phase of Bruges (850–950). The animal bones from these deposits reinforce the image of an elite settlement, displaying a high proportion of pig and

remarkable species of game including a brown bear (Ervynck 1991).

The strongest evidence for the presence of a royal fortified *curtis* (or manorial estate) to be associated with official defence systems from the mid-9th century comes from Petegem on the River Schelde (Fig. 13.1). The court complex here included a palace area and a church, surrounded by a moat 7.0 m wide and 3.5 m deep of the second half of the 9th century. This court was the venue for meetings of the highest officials of the north of West-Francia; indeed, in 864 Charles the Bald signed at least one charter in the palace here (see Callebaut 1994).

Fortresses in Context

Petegem and Bruges seemingly fit well into the profile of royal fortifications referred to in the Edict of Pîtres issued by Charles the Bald in 864 (Callebaut 1994; Halsall 2003, 99; Lançon *et al.* 2015, 88). In this *Capitularium*, the king organises the defence of West-Francia in order to prevent the Vikings reaching '*the heart of his kingdom*' (Halsall 2003, 99). The text describes obligations to the Crown in the event of military campaigns and how every person owning a horse had to perform military service in the army when summoned. The mobilised army was to perform watch duty in the fortresses and towns and had to help with the construction of new fortifications near rivers and points of transit; it also stated that no-one other than the king was permitted to establish fortresses and that warriors had to lay down their weapons within 40 days of the end of a campaign (ibid.; Lançon *et al.* 2015).

The Edict of Pîtres reveals something of the political instability of the mid-9th century, which in fact continued well into the next decades. Out of all the fortresses under discussion here, only Petegem, Bruges, Saint-Omer and Domburg can be securely connected to initiatives to erect defences against Viking threats, albeit not always the same threats. Saint-Omer in fact is the only case that can be related with any certainty to the events of 879–891. Antwerp was also perhaps a late 9th-century fortification, although there are indications that the town might not have been under royal control at that time.

We should, however, transcend the near-exclusive focus on Viking threats that has hitherto characterised the debate. The fortifications discussed in this essay may all originate in the 9th century, but their

biographies are more complex and variable than simply denoting a defence against Viking war bands between 878 and 891. Some fortifications have clear royal connections, while others do not. Moreover, in many cases these fortresses functioned across much wider and diverse contexts: for example, at three ringforts, Oost-Souburg, Middelburg and Domburg, a 'second phase' of construction, consisting of a significant enlargement of the rampart, has been identified (van Heeringen 1995b, 22–25, 31), while at Oost-Souburg, the roads and gates may have been erected only in a second stage, together with the provision of a significantly wider moat. Regardless of whether these represent wholesale works of reconstruction or more localised repairs (van Heeringen 1995a, 51), the evidence shows that the defensive purpose of the forts continued for some time after their construction, and was not limited to the (later) 9th century. As far as they can be compared, given the variable level of excavation, the three forts on Walcheren differ in various respects. Thus while the site of the fort at Domburg was already inhabited before the ramparts were built as a (peripheral?) part of the long-lived late Merovingian and Carolingian trading site and royal *villa* of *Walichrum*, Oost-Souburg appears to have been a new settlement. By the 10th century, Domburg and Middelburg featured relatively dense, urban-type occupation. The fort at Oost-Souburg, on the other hand, was much less densely populated and perhaps had a much more militarised character. Around AD 950, the king or his close ally, the bishop of Utrecht, is thought to have built a collegiate church dedicated to St. Martin at a location just west of the fort of Middelburg, which was to become the mother church of all later parishes in Zeeland (Dekker 1971, 324–325; P. A. Henderikx 1993, 138, 147; Van Vliet 2002, 196–198). This major monumental addition has no parallel at the other forts on Walcheren, and its presence helps to explain why this fortified settlement became the religious, administrative and commercial centre of the island, while the others fell into decline in the 11th/12th century (Henderikx 2002). The archaeological signatures for Oost-Souburg and Domburg differ in other respects as well, such as in the range of craft activities performed there (*e.g.* bronze working was limited to Domburg) and the quality of non-ferrous dress accessories (compare van Heeringen 1995d, 172–173 with Ufkes 2011, 119–127).

In coastal Flanders, Bruges became a stronghold of Count Baldwin

II against the West-Frankish King *c*. 892 (discussed in Declercq 2011). Baldwin was a remarkable figure: grandson of Charles the Bald and son-in-law of Alfred of Wessex, he appears in the late 9th century as one of the most powerful princes in Europe (Tys 2004; Meijns 2007). When the West-Frankish king attempted to defeat Baldwin in 892, the latter retreated to Bruges; according to the sources, this was enough to make the king give up his attempts (Declercq 2011, 131). Bruges became a prestigious comital fortress with a collegiate church in the mid-10th century. The first ringfort to be transformed into a base of comital power was Veurne, where a collegiate church was erected well before 918; Veurne was probably also the first administrative centre of the vast comital estates in the coastal salt marshes (Tys 2004, 2013; Meijns 2007). These salt marshes were ideal grazing grounds for sheep and great profits were made from wool production. Forts such as Veurne, plus other sites in Flanders and Zeeland, may have been part-designed to control this rich local resource rather than simply to counter enemy efforts against the hinterland. The broader historical record makes clear that most, if not all ringfort locations held previous significance as estate centres (Henderikx 1995, 99–101; Tys 2004; 2013; Deckers 2014, 108–109). It is therefore conceivable that other actors were involved in fort construction, notably abbeys and – perhaps more likely during the upheavals of the late 9th and 10th century – regional and local magnates acting (semi-)independently from the royal courts.

Warfare and the problem of raising an army had since long been issues for the Carolingian rulers: lords and men from their estates as well as freemen who could afford a horse had to perform military duty when asked, but already in 811 disobedience and neglect of military duty corroded this vital component of Carolingian central power (see Halsall 2003, 89–97). The noted Edict of Pîtres testifies how these problems had grown considerably by the 860s and even suggests a hint of panic in the royal court of Charles the Bald. As Halsall states, 'these problems eventually proved insurmountable, and they were not helped by Viking and Arab attacks' (2003, 93). Officials, lords and local free landowners increasingly used their military rights and manpower to develop their own power and position, thereby weakening the central garrisons of the Carolingian rulers. It is therefore not surprising that in our study region the construction of a

range of fortresses was seemingly instigated by different actors and agents, and with different contextual purposes, ranging from local defensive initiatives over smaller royal fortresses on crossroads to regional initiatives by lords that used them to defy royal power and construct regal-like courts of their own.

Several authors have drawn parallels with the Late Saxon *burh* system in England, of which the Flemish count Baldwin II must have been aware through his family ties with the Anglo-Saxon court (Cools 1994, 28; Meijns 2007, 547–548; Tys 2013; on *burhs*, see Christie, this volume). We can indeed see how those fortresses under his control were transformed between the late 9th and the mid-10th century into *burh*-like strongholds with administrative, military and symbolic purposes. Parts of comital estates nearby were given in fief to *milites* who acted as the core of the comital army and bodyguard. Veurne, Bruges, Bourbourg and Bergues served as strongholds for the development of the autonomous princedom of Flanders with strong central institutions and eventually, in the 11th century, as the centres of administrative districts or castellanies called *Kasselrijen* or *Burggraafschappen*. Thus, the counts successfully followed the example of the Burghal Hidage, something that could not be achieved by the Carolingian royal courts earlier.

In the second half of the 10th century, a number of fortresses that had become centres of Ottonian power underwent similar developments. These included Antwerp, which shifted from a trade settlement outside of royal control to a *vicus* that became part of an Ottonian network of trade and power, to which also belonged Tiel and Aachen (Verhulst 1978, 30–31; Tys and Wouters in press). Around 1000, a new limestone wall replaced the old earthen rampart at Antwerp (Bellens *et al*. 2012, 13). Furthermore, the construction of a Saint Walburga chapel in this fortress (stratigraphically overlying 9th-century houses) fits this transformation of the D-shaped core of the town into the high-status Ottonian *burg*. Similar developments seem to have taken place in Middelburg, whereas in Ghent, the counts of Flanders had a new fort built outside the 9th-century D-shaped fortification in the first decades of the 10th century. This new *castellum* started as a wooden stronghold but by the 11th century it had evolved into a *domus lapidea et turris* in association with a collegiate church, comital aula and adjacent artisanal quarters

(Callebaut 1994). The older D-shaped moat would have been filled in before AD 1000. Fortifications that stood outside this system of feudal strongholds or did not fit into the new balance of power became redundant and disappeared from the landscape (Domburg, Oost-Souburg, etc.).

Conclusion

In line with changes in many other parts of Europe, the coastal region of Flanders and Zeeland – the estuary of the Rivers Schelde and Meuse – saw the creation of fortified sites from the 9th century onwards. The first documentary attestations indicate military activity and the erection of watch-posts rather than large-scale construction works; however, the relationship between the written and archaeological sources is problematic, to say the least. We encounter a rather classic case of archaeology being forced into an historical narrative and chronological framework with a narrow focus on Viking attacks. Instead, the recent archaeological evidence reveals a much more complex picture: thus the chronologies derived from dendrochronology, radiocarbon dating and other techniques show that the known fortifications cover a time-range spanning the first decades of the 9th century (Domburg) until the first half of the 10th century; moreover, most fortifications were active well into the 10th century, when many underwent modifications and/or enlargements. In some cases the first donjons and castle structures replaced the older 9th-century initiatives (as at Ghent). Archaeology also illustrates the wider variety in forms and construction of these defences and their enclosures.

Attacks by Danish war-bands undoubtedly played a role in the rise of defensive initiatives, but the cases discussed here point towards a general situation of instability and political conflict(s). Danish presence in the Carolingian Low Countries was much more complex than hostile attacks by an enemy with a homogeneous ethnicity. On the other hand, it appears that the Carolingian defensive initiatives were not the result of convergent forces, unified against external threats. Honing in on the different defensive reactions, we notice many divergent initiatives throughout the period under study, ranging from small- to large-scale, local to regional, permanent to temporary, etc. Overall, the limited archaeological data hamper our detailed

understanding of the individual roots and trajectories of many forts; but we also need, as seen, to question the data already available.

Those fortresses that continued to function and evolve throughout the 10th century did so in the context of new territorial powers and polities, acting as ideological markers of new agents of power. The specific trajectories of those forts that played decisive roles in the formation of power or in urban developments highlight continuity and the transmission of type forms rather than discontinuity and change. Apparently, political powers did not negatively influence the long-term development of trade and the rise of towns. One of the questions connected to this development is the relationship to production and trade of rural and artisanal products. This, however, is an issue that requires more attention in research regarding the multiple and intriguing links between landscape, economy and society in the dynamic period of transformation of the 9th and 10th centuries.

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Abbreviations

KIK: radiocarbon dates from the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage Belgium (http://c14.kikirpa.be/)

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14

Early and High Medieval ‘Incastellamento’ in Northern Iberia: Fortified Settlements in the Basque Country and Upper Ebro Valley (9th–12th Centuries)

Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo[1]

Introduction

The archaeological study of fortified settlements has not been one of the most important research themes in Iberia in recent decades, in contrast to other European countries. Of course, this does not mean that the archaeology of fortifications lacks a lengthy trajectory in our country, and indeed since the later 19th and early 20th centuries onwards there have been numerous excavations of medieval castles (in Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque Country, for example), although only on rare occasions have these been analysed in relation to any associated settlements. (For recent analyses of early medieval castles in northern Iberia see Quirós Castillo and Tejado Sebastián eds 2012; important regional studies include Gutiérrez González 1995 and Bohigas Roldán 1999).

For this reason, when conditions became suitable for the development of modern Medieval Archaeology – from the mid-1980s onwards (see Quirós Castillo 2014) – the theoretical and conceptual framework in which this took place was that of architectural history and, more specifically, its military expression as a result of the political activity of central powers; in Spain, this was generally termed ‘castellology’. (Four international conferences on Iberian

'Castellologia' have been overseen by the Spanish Association of Castles: AA. VV. 1994; AA. VV. 2001; Ruibal Rodríguez 2005; AA. VV 2012). Indeed, the ideological shadow of the paradigm of the Christian Reconquest/Riconquista, and the context of frontier conflict between Islamic and feudal societies or between different kingdoms, has influenced studies of this type of site for decades. Although from the 1990s onwards new approaches began to analyse medieval fortifications in the context of the expansion of feudalism – often supported by evidence found in the written documentation – most scholarly attention has remained centred on the material study of sites' defensive components as an expression of power. However, from such perspectives it has proven difficult to explain why or how such fortifications played a significant role in the construction of seigneurial authority, and even to determine what the material reality of the creation of such lordships was.

This is the context in which we should understand the lukewarm reception that has been afforded to the theory of *incastellamento* in northern Iberia. Very recent was the 40th anniversary of the publication of Pierre Toubert's seminal study (1973) of the structures of medieval Lazio, in which he argued that the castles created around AD 1000 in this Italian region were instruments that permitted the seigneurial structuring of the rural peasantry. In this sense the military nature of the castle was relegated to a second plane – and indeed in the Lazio region such sites are very much fortified settlements – whereas the social and political aspects of the phenomenon were accentuated. Toubert argued that the process of gathering the peasantry into these new walled and elevated nuclei (around which all productive activity came to be centred) was the most visible sign of the social redefinition of the countryside by the seigneurial class. Taking into account that this theory was formulated at the same time as the discipline of Medieval Archaeology was being consolidated in France and Italy, it comes as no surprise that debate around the question of fortified settlements has been articulated in the south of Europe around the *incastellamento* model. Indeed, the debate about the validity, utility and variants of this theory explains a good deal of the archaeological analysis that has taken place in rural contexts of southern Europe over the last 30 years or so (cf. Molinari 2010).

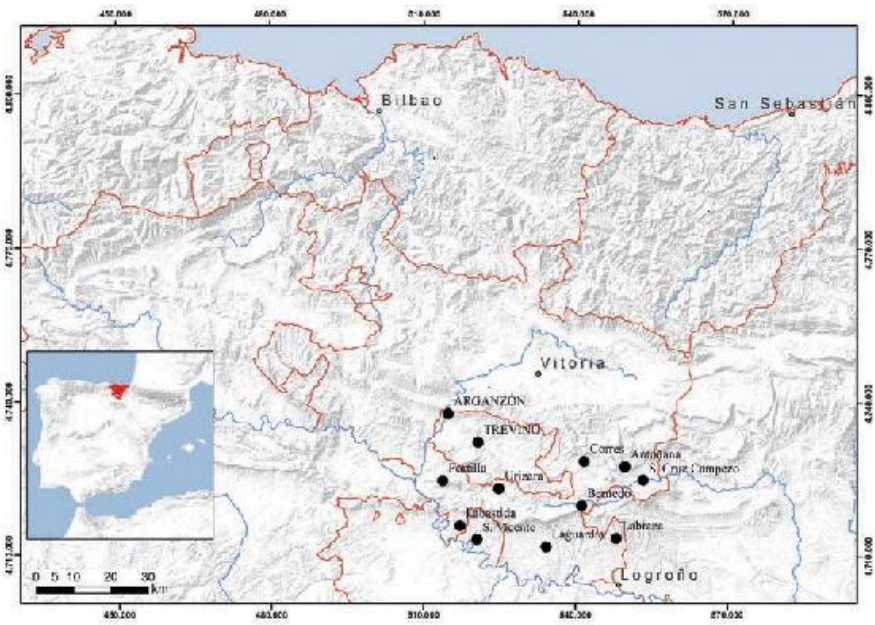

Figure 14.1. Map of the sites cited in the text (Image by author).

Figure 14.2. Peña del Castillo in Marquínez (Alava) (Image by author).

Paradoxically, in Iberia, this debate – which developed from the 1990s onwards – was led above all by specialists in Islamic archaeology, attempting to evaluate the possible existence of seigneurial structures ('señores de renta') through the study of the

husûn, until then considered collective or state fortifications (see, especially, papers in Barceló and Toubert 1998). By contrast, the impact of theory and theoretical approaches on both historians and archaeologists of the Christian kingdoms has been very limited or even, arguably, non-existent. Only in a few studies of specific regions, such as in Navarre, Aragon, Catalonia or the frontier with al-Andalus, that the paradigm has been successfully applied (*e.g.* Batet i Company 1996; Laliena Corbera and Utrilla Utrilla 1997; Larrea 1998; Farias 2001). Elsewhere, in most regions, such as Galicia-Portugal, and the kingdoms of León and Castile, scholars have rejected its utility as a tool of analysis. Moreover, the debate has so far been led almost entirely by historians, since archaeologists have failed in recent years to construct records of sufficient depth and quality to successfully tackle such problems. Specifically, José María Minguez (1998) and Iñaki Martín Viso (2001), in two important studies of the process of feudalisation of the kingdoms of Castile and Leon, rejected the applicability of the *incastellamento* model/process in these territories. Martín Viso indeed concluded that 'castles did not have a fundamental role in the articulation of the feudal system since the process of concentration was centred around the village… the castle was only an element of secondary importance in the social landscape', and more emphatically still that 'the castle was a centre of political power … and not of seigneurial rights' (2001, 105).

Even in Catalonia, where previously scholars as important as Pierre Bonnassie recommended employing the concept of *incastellamento* to analyse the region's feudalisation (1991, 441–442), an archaeology of feudalism centred around fortified settlements has failed to materialise. Practically the only scholar to apply the model has been Miquel Barceló and his research group (*e.g.* Barceló 1993), but this has been done only to a series of specific cases, and has generated no systematic study of the phenomenon. This is not because of a lack of examples, but because of the dominance of political and military perspectives that tend to marginalise analyses of a social character, and that have even conditioned the interpretation of the material record. For example, at some Catalonian sites, such as Viver, post-built structures have been interpreted as wooden towers due to their location in a castle (Riu 1985–1986), rather than seen as domestic structures, such as have been recognised in various early

medieval villages in southern Europe.

With the new millennium, grand paradigms of the feudal mutation or *incastellamento* variety have been substantially revised and reconfigured, and thus, for example, in the recent monographic dossier edited by Alessandra Molinari (2010) in the journal *Archeologia Medievale*, their impact on the Italian peninsula as a whole and even on the Lazio region has been re-sized.

Meanwhile, in north-western Iberia, the impact of Rescue Archaeology has for the first time permitted the systematic and extensive study of medieval villages and open settlements, in such a way that castles are no longer central to the study of rural areas. Similarly, recent studies of fortifications in places such as Peñaferruz (Gutiérrez González 2003), the central Vizcaya (García Camino 2002) or in other parts of the Basque Country, have suggested that the castles of the north were neither heavily occupied or permanently inhabited nor significant players in the process of the formation of seigneuries or lordships; instead they have been interpreted more as instruments of territorial defence and as symbols of local power than as active agents in the organisation of power, yoking together quite disparate realities.

Nonetheless, in recent years a new archaeological project focusing on fortified settlements has been conducted. Although the records generated are still limited in comparison with other European contexts, they are sufficiently eloquent when it comes to observing some tendencies. In this paper, therefore, the preliminary results of this project are presented, analysing the 10th- and 11th-century fortified settlements recently discovered in the Basque Country and nearby.

During this important period, what are now the Basque Country and the Rioja were frontier territories, which swayed alternately between the neighbouring County of Castile (unified from AD 932 by Fernán González, to become from the 11th century the Kingdom of Castile) and the Kingdom of Pamplona (which first emerges *c*. 820 under Iñigo Arista). Indeed, the whole region was influenced and disputed between the two kingdoms throughout the 11th and 12th centuries, until a fixed frontier was established in 1200 which endured throughout the later medieval period (For the politico-historical framework, see Martinez Díez 1974 and Martinez Díez 2005).

Moreover, this frontier status explains the development of initiatives of political experimentation at a local level on which the legitimacy of the central powers would be articulated. It is in this context, fluid in both social and political terms, that we believe that the fortified settlements can best be understood (Fig. 14.1).

The Archaeological Evidence

Early medieval castles in the Basque Country?

In the Basque Country and nearby over 50 castles have so far been registered, although only a handful of these have been examined archaeologically. Most are castles of limited dimensions, consisting of a tower built in the 11th century, such as Marquinez (see Fig. 14.2), or the 12th (*e.g.* Untzueta, Ocio), often with a small enclosure containing a cistern (see Plata Montero and Solaun Bustinza 2009; Quirós Castillo 2012).

Unlike in other parts of northern Iberia where fortified settlements and castles are registered from as early as the 5th century AD (particularly in the Duero and the Ebro basins), in the Basque Country private castles are only documented from the 10th century onwards (with a few exceptions such as the late antique occupation of Aitzorrotz – see Senper Mazizor and Sagredo Garde 2011). So far, therefore, we lack any coherent indication in the Basque Country of a 'first generation of castles' or even a 'second generation of castles' dated between the 5th–9th centuries AD, as documented in other northern Iberia areas (Quirós Castillo 2013b).

However, we should not exclude the existence of older castles in some areas of the region. For example, from the second half of the 9th century on, documentary records show the emergence of local political powers settled in different areas of Old Castille, in the west of the Alava province and the present northern Burgos. Indeed, scholars such as Martínez Díez (2005) have pointed out that the origin of the very name of Castile must be related to the existence of castles concentrated in this area; even if there is currently limited archaeological evidence supporting this hypothesis, we cannot reject it given how few archaeological studies have sought to explore castles in this area. In fact, the sole castle studied in this area, Tedeja, appears to have been occupied from the late Roman period until the High

Middle Ages (Palomino *et al.* 2012). Another documented castle is Bilibio, located in the border between La Rioja and Alava, which is mentioned in the 7th-century *Life of Saint Emilian*; here, too, close archaeological survey may be rewarding.

Carlos Estepa (2009) has studied the earliest documents of the Old Castile counties in order to analyse their territorial structure and to trace the location of the central places. In his opinion, the 9th- and 10th-century documents show the existence of five main county centres where power was based: Lara, Burgos, Cerezo, Lantarón and Alava. With the exception of the last site, whose location remains undetermined, the other four can be traced.

Of these, Lantarón is the sole site located in current Basque Country, in the south west of the region, in the area of the village of Sobron. According to some 11th- and 12th-century documents, the castle and the village of Lantaron were settled between Sobron, Bachicabo, Berguenda and the Ebro River (Álamo 1950, n. 18; Ledesma 1976, n. 426). An intensive archaeological project conducted in the last three years aimed to study the Lantarón site; unfortunately, the intensive modern transformations of the area prevented identification of a castle here. However, notable medieval occupation activity has been discovered in different sectors of this area (San Martín, La Viña, Valderrocín, Tejuela) and the documentary evidence shows an anomalous concentration of palaces, churches and monasteries. The excavation of the San Martin sector has revealed both funerary and residential occupation from the 7th century until the end of the Middle Ages. Some new research is imminent in the Castrejon and Salas sectors in order to pinpoint the medieval castle. In any case, the rapid expansion of the Castille county and kingdom towards the South along the 10th century determined that Lantarón lost its importance in favour of the Termino castle.

Overall, even though most of the castles studied in the Basque Country can be dated from the 10th–11th century on, there are some indicators of possible older fortified centres in the area of the Ebro valley. Continued research should help prove if the absence of castles in the Old Castile is determined by the lack of archaeological research or is a consequence of the strategies followed by local elites, well documented in some areas of the region from the 7th and 8th centuries.

Incastellamento in the Basque Country

However, in recent years a number of true fortified settlements, consisting of both seigneurial units and domestic peasant spaces, have been identified and analysed in the southernmost part of the Basque Country, in that very frontier area disputed by the two political formations mentioned above. Although we have good reason to believe that a significant number of such settlements existed, here we concentrate on just three key and well-studied sites: Treviño, Arganzón and Labastida.

The castle of Treviño is situated in the valley of the river Ayuda, and gives its name to a homonymous late medieval county; the modern town is today little more than a village (Fig. 14.3). In terms of early documentation, besides a possible mention of the settlement in 1028, it probably received a charter from Sancho VI, king of Navarre, in 1161 (but the date is disputed); the site is certainly documented from the last quarter of the 12th century onwards.

While a number of radio masts have been built on the summit, impacting on space and access, nonetheless, archaeological interventions there and on the sides of the castle hill (as it is known) have allowed us to establish a much more extensive occupational sequence (Quirós Castillo 2011). Covering the rather patchy remains of late Iron Age occupation, signs of a castle founded in the 10th century have been detected, which suggests that the site lay out of use during the Roman and late antique periods. By the second half of the 10th century, Treviño comprised a fortified settlement ordered into two distinct parts: on the hilltop was an area of seigneurial occupation covering some 850 m^2 and bounded by a deep trench; further down, on the slopes, an area covering *c*. 4000 m^2 and likely inhabited by peasant families has been identified, with timber dwellings on stone footings built on and into the slope. The whole complex was surrounded by a stone wall. At the foot of the hill, outside the circuit wall, during the 11th century another nucleus of dwellings grew up, although its full extension is yet to be determined.

In the seigneurial sector of the site only negative structures excavated into the bedrock have been found (though other constructions could have been destroyed by subsequent occupations); notable among these is a group of large storage-pits of the 11th and early 12th centuries used for holding food from rents. Their

dimensions are enormous, in some instances reaching over 2.0 m in depth and width, and thus having three times the storage capacity of their domestic equivalents from the same period. The evidence for the food consumed in this lordly sector point predominantly towards pork and lamb or goat, with little evidence of beef; in terms of ages of the consumed animals, the high presence of young specimens suggests an economy geared towards meat production. This archaeozoological evidence contrasts significantly with that found in the peasant spaces, where adult or old specimens abound and where there is a higher concentration of bovines – a pattern pointing to a primarily agricultural use – and a scarcity of swine.

Regarding the peasant or worker sector of the site, here too negative structures have been detected in the bedrock, including family (or domestic-oriented) storage-pits, capable of holding – at most – almost one year's worth of grain for a household. This would represent a strategic reserve allowing a family to withstand bad harvests and ensuring the viability of the productive unit by safeguarding it from the need to seek potentially ruinous loans from the local elite.

Although we lack direct evidence to the effect, we can assume that Treviño, at least from the early 11th century onwards, had already constructed its own seigneurial territory. This would explain the absence of Treviño and other spaces linked to fortified settlements from documents such as the so-called 'Reja de San Millán'. This text, preserved in the cartulary of the important monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla and dated to 1025, contains a list of over 300 settlements recording the rents that each had to pay to the monastery (see García de Cortázar 2005; Pastor Díaz de Garayo 2011). The absence of certain spaces, such as that around Treviño, can be tidily explained by seeing a consolidation of these areas as territorial units of power centred on castles.

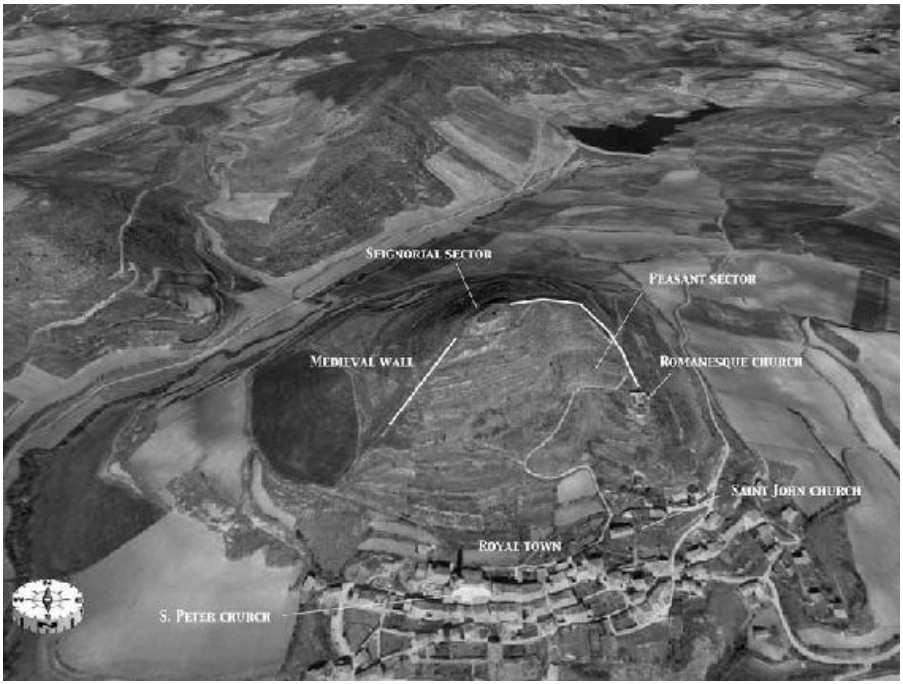

Figure 14.3. General view of the Treviño village and castle (Burgos) (Image by author).

Towards the mid-12th century, the castle of Treviño underwent a profound transformation which is probably associated with the granting of a *fuero* (a municipal charter) by King Sancho VI 'the Wise' of Navarre and Bishop Rodrigo of Calahorra in 1161, though our only source for this *fuero* is a lengthy inscription preserved in the church of Saint John the Baptist in Treviño, dating from the 13th century. In material terms, a church, probably dedicated to Saint Clement, was built within the castle; in addition there was a prominent wall, only partially excavated, 1.5 m thick and at least 16 m long. During this period the extramural nucleus was also consolidated and the church of Saint Peter likely built, with several tombs coming to occupy space previously dedicated to domestic use.

Figure 14.4. View of the site and excavations of the Arganzón castle (Burgos) (Image by author).

In the 13th century – by when Treviño had come under Castilian control – the definitive transformation of the defended complex took place. The new royal town that took shape below the castle site was centred around at least two churches – St Peter's and St John's; interestingly, while the residential part of the castle was largely abandoned, the site retained a seigneurial role as the seat of the royal sheriff. Probably to this period can be set the extension of the walled precinct which linked the castle on the hilltop to the town at its feet.

Parallels are observed between this sequence and the nearby castle of Arganzón, which controls the homonymous pass where the river Zadorra, a tributary of the Ebro, breaches the Montes de Vitoria range.

Although the site is now heavily overgrown, by using a LiDAR sensor we have been able to identify and analyse it in detail (Figure 14.4). Previously the only visible remains were a tower surviving to *c*. 13 m high, but it transpires that the whole precinct covered some 800 m^2 and was heavily fortified, with a ditch some 5.0 m deep protecting its south side. South of the walled area a variety of structures spread over an area of *c*. 7,500 m^2 have been identified, though it is not clear whether they were contained within the walls. In this case, too, the castle itself is not documented until the late 12th century, by which time the Navarrese monarch Sancho 'the Wise' had already founded a royal town over a pre-existing rural settlement. Finally, the first settlement of Arganzón, which dates back to the 8th century if not earlier, is located between the castle and the royal foundation. Hence, in High Middle Ages a complex settlement structure was in operation, likely showing a tension between different political agents on a local scale (Fig. 14.5).

As in Treviño, the castle of Arganzón was created in the 10th century on top of an Iron Age site, and was configured as a socially polarised site divided between a seigneurial sector with imposing defences and a domestic/working area. Here the stone fortification wall can be dated to the 11th century, probably to its second half, when the overall precinct was strengthened by the addition of a square tower to the north, a second tower to the south near the ditch and a surrounding wall. Inside this complex a cistern for water-storage has also been found, as has a well-built structure probably intended for domestic/residential use. The settlement south of the ditch has only been partially sampled, in part because of the density of the vegetation, but we know from surface finds and texts that this site was in use between the 10th–13th centuries. In fact, the site might be identified with the village of *Torriciella*, dependent on the nearby town of La Puebla de Arganzón in 1257 (Rodríguez 1989, n. 235). The castle was in use throughout the Late Middle Ages: both written sources and archaeological evidence show that Arganzón suffered in at least two military actions (in the late 12th and the mid-13th centuries), with repairs being required as a result. By the 12th century if not earlier, however, the complex lay in the hands of the Crown, with its political functions in time shifting to Puebla de Arganzón, a royal town founded in the valley just 2 km away after *c*. 1150. Despite

this urban presence, the fortified site remained in use until the late 15th century when the defensive wall, tower and all the internal structures were demolished by request of the town of Vitoria (Archivo General de Simancas, Contaduría Mayor de Hacienda, 1147AGS).

While Puebla de Arganzón was established away from the castle, it is noticeable that in other cases, such as at Bernedo, Balmaseda and Treviño, new towns were built directly at the foot of the castle (see Fernández Bordegary 2004a for Bernedo; García Camino *et al.* 1988 for Balmaseda; see above for Treviño) (Fig. 14.6).

A final, third example is Labastida castle (Fig. 14.7). This medieval town is located in the Ebro valley, in the south of the Basque Country, and was founded in 1242 by King Fernando III at the foot of a hill nowadays called 'The Castle'. On the hillslope is a small church dedicated to Saint Christ, founded before the 12th century according to the archaeological study conducted during restoration works in the 1990s (Azkarate 1995). The oldest structure traced is Romanesque, enlarged during the late medieval and modern periods. However, excavation pointed also to the likely dismantling of an earlier structure, probably of the 11th century.

Recent excavation on the hilltop has shown that the old castle, documented as late as the 14th century, was abandoned *c.* AD 1500. Unfortunately, very recent public works carried out in the area have caused the total destruction of the archaeological site. However, some pottery finds from secondary deposits testify that the site was also in use during the 11th and 12th centuries. Although we cannot establish the nature of this occupation, it is contemporary with the Saint Christ church. Furthermore, the first phase at Labastida seems to come a little later than at the Treviño and Arganzon sites.

Like the other two sites, Labastida did not concentrate all the surrounding rural inhabitants in or around the castle. Indeed, we know of a number of small early villages in the envrions, most of them active until the Late Middle Ages (*e.g.* Mutilluri, Remelluri, Revilla, La Estacada, Torrentejo). However, we can certainly suggest that an important village was founded on the slopes and at the base of the castle hill during the 11th and 12th centuries, and that from the 13th century on, Labastida attracted in much of the local peasantry, meaning that the other, older villages were progressively abandoned.

Figure 14.5. Location of the Arganzón castle, the village of Arganzón and the royal town of La Puebla de Arganzón (Burgos) (Image by author).

Labastida, and the entire Ebro valley in general, is not covered by the Reja of San Millan. Despite this, the documentary evidence shows the existence of very powerful seigneurial families active from the 11th century on. Prominent in this area is the role of the Don Marcello family, one of the strongest feudal powers and linked to the Kingdom of Pamplona (Fortún Pérez de Ciriza 1985). Nonetheless, these seigneurial powers could not create hegemonic political structures.

The three examples discussed illustrate three different ways in which seigneurial power arose, was exhibited and then came to be absorbed into royal authority. Probably the Treviño model, namely a 10th-century civilian foundation later integrated into the royal power, was the commonest and we could likely related the cases of Balmaseda, Bernedo, Labraza, Corres and Antoñana to this model – although, in the absence of detailed studies of these sites, we must be cautious (for Bernedo and Balmaseda, see above; for Labraza, see Fernández Bordegaray 2004b; for Antoñana see Apellaniz González and Fernández Bordegary 1995; for Corres castle, a new archaeological project is imminent).

The case of Arganzón is more complex, taking into account the co-

existence of different settlement structures (the early medieval village of Arganzón, the 10th-/11th-century castle and the 12th-century royal foundation); unlike at Treviño, the new foundations did not wholly replace the old settlements and, as a result, the new communities were shaped and reshaped in different social contexts.

Finally, the Labastida foundation seems slightly later than the other sites, and was established in a very different political context. Although the archaeological data are very limited and no written evidence exists for its first centuries of activity, it could be argued that the role of the Kingdom of Navarra was very significant in this foundation.

In summary, these case studies show how some of the local powers that emerged in the 10th and 11th centuries in the context of the Castile and Navarra frontier were able to create fortified settlements as means to fund solid seigneurial political structures.

Figure 14.6. Castle and walled medieval village of Bernedo (Alava) (Image by author).

Figure 14.7. The castle and the Santo Cristo church of Labastida (Alava) (Image by author).

Discussion

When interpreting these archaeological documents we should bear in mind that many of the interventions at different castles and settlement sites are as yet unpublished. Nonetheless, some general trends can be recognised.

First, it should be highlighted that the material structure of the fortified settlements of the 10th century was very simple, consisting of constructions employing mixed techniques (stone with earth and wood) or based on wooden posts, and that only in later periods do we find structures that could be termed 'monumental'. Nonetheless, in both Treviño and Arganzón from the earliest stages of occupation there was a clear spatial segregation between a seigneurial sector and a peasant one. Strikingly, these settlements were protected either by walls (as at Treviño) or by ditches (Treviño, Arganzón and probably Campezo and Antoñana). Although several aspects of our findings are still being analysed, sufficient evidence is available to reveal that the lifestyles of the seigneurial and peasant sectors were significantly different, with both the bioarchaeological evidence and building types particularly telling. Moreover, the storage pits discovered in Treviño indicate that such sites were centres for the speculative accumulation

of rents.

Another symptom of the simplicity of these sites is the absence (with the exception so far of Labastida) of churches or funerary areas associated with this early period. The general dissemination of parishes, and hence of churches in rural communities, took place in our region from the 12th century onwards. However, numerous monasteries and private churches built in Álava during the 10th century (we have references to at least 200) acted as another instrument of seigneurialisation, and moreover one inserted in the heart of the villages themselves, without altering the settlement patterns as the fortified settlements seem to have done (Quirós Castillo and Santos Salazar 2010).

It was only during a second phase, during the 11th century in Arganzón and during the 12th in Treviño, that the seigneurial spaces became monumentalised through the introduction of new techniques and models of construction. In particular, in castles such as Arganzón and Marquinez (Solaun Bustinza 2008) we observe high quality constructive and architectural skills that should be attributed to groups of specialised itinerant stonemasons. The quality of such work is very high, and is similar to that observed in only the most complex of contemporary urban and monastic churches.

By contrast, in the 12th century, the variety of constructions becomes more complex, and while the architecture of castles such as those at Treviño, Untzueta (Plata Montero and Solaun Bustinza 2009) and Ocio (Solaun 2003) is significant in terms of size, it is less so in terms of constructional complexity, and so far we have not seen examples of the sort of high-quality stonemasonry skills that are common in the religious architecture of the period. What we do observe with growing frequency, however, is the creation of cisterns and auxiliary constructions that suggest restricted and privatised access to water.

We also see then growing differences in lifestyle between the different sectors of the castles, or between castles and other contemporary settlements. Thus, for example, both the imported red-painted pottery found in the infill of one of the 11th-century towers of Arganzón, and the glazed ceramics, probably of Andalusían origin, found in 12th-century contexts in Treviño are rare in the villages of the same period. Similarly, isotopic analysis of the diet of the lords of

Treviño records very significant contrasts with that of the peasantry, the difference residing, above all, in the consumption of animal proteins (Quirós Castillo 2013a).

It is more complex to explain the *absence* of castles before the 10th century. This is a peripheral area regarding the proto-states emerging from the 8th century in Asturias and Navarra. In fact, some early castles are known in Asturias from this period, and traces also exist in Navarra (Quirós Castillo 2012b). Was the early medieval aristocracy of the Basque Country not strong enough to found castles in the 9th and 10th centuries? Perhaps this explanation is valid for the northern area, where signs of social complexity appear less evident in the 8th- and 9th-century archaeological record (*e.g.* García Camino 2002; Sarasola and Moraza 2011). However, the Alava record shows a more articulated reality: there are clear signs of incoming collection and territorial hierarchies (Quirós Castillo 2013c). But local powers appear based on small or medium-size monasteries, churches and villages. Indeed, most of the Basque Country castles may have been simply added to an existing political and settlement framework in 10th–12th centuries, but with a limited role. The exceptions are the fortified settlements discussed in this paper; they may be few, but they hold great relevance at a local scale.

Conclusion

To conclude, the founding of fortified settlements from the 10th century onwards in the southern Basque Country can be understood in terms of the concept of *incastellamento* as defined by Toubert (1973): an occupation of new sites, and a concentration of settlements, often coinciding with their fortification. However, in contrast to Lazio in central Italy where the process meant political ruptures, in the Basque Country the fortified settlements seem to have been absorbed into an existing political system.

In the absence of written sources, it is of course very difficult to identify the different social groups associated with these settlements. Nonetheless, we believe that these fortifications are best understood within the dynamics of a frontier created between competing emergent central powers, which in turn enabled the consolidation of local powers drawn into the developing political framework. On the other hand, we know that from the 8th century onwards a dense

network of villages and rural settlements sprang up in this region. In this sense, the creation of these castles in an attempt to concentrate part of this population and configure its members as subjects articulated around a castle should be regarded as a relative novelty, particularly given the limited number of such cases. In political terms, however, these initiatives would have had greater relevance and in centres such as Treviño, Arganzón and perhaps Labastida local lords managed to impose forms of seigneurial dominance which were manifested, above all, in the introduction of an efficient system of collecting rents, as indicated especially by the large storage pits of Treviño. The relevance of these fortified settlements was such that they often became the base from which the Navarrese and Castilian monarchs expanded their authority. Although it is impossible to identify the promoters of such initiatives, they were likely locally-based lay families.

Nonetheless, we should not forget that storage pits of similar characteristics and chronologies have been found in other villages and rural centres (such as Zaballa and Dulantzi – see Quirós Castillo 2012; Quirós Castillo *et al.* 2013), and we know that it was principally in such open settlements that the local nobility and lesser aristocracy built up their seigneurial networks in this region. Early medieval churches also acted as focal-points of seigneurial control in different parts of Álava, as has been shown by various authors (*e.g.* Larrea 2007; Quirós Castillo 2011b). In other words, the process of seigneurial restructuring of the peasantry was complex and multi-layered, achieved through a variety of methods.

Thus these castles were just another of the instruments used by the lords of the 10th century to assert their control locally, though probably the most solid and effective one since it guaranteed a high degree of territorial cohesion, which in turn would explain the durability of such centres. Indeed, it seems likely that the powers articulated around the castles would have been practically hegemonic during the 11th century, and only from the 12th century onwards would they come fully under the control of royal authority, probably as a result of processes of personal negotiation. For their part, the creation of royal towns in the near or immediate proximity allowed the monarchs to absorb and transform the earlier fortified settlements.

Taken together, all of these arguments suggest a range of

heterogeneous functions on differing scales for the castles and fortified settlements that cannot easily and exclusively be ascribed to either military or social spheres.

Finally, I must point out that the dynamics we have observed in our study region are analogous in many ways to what has been observed in recent studies from other parts of Europe. In Italy, for example, the hegemony of the *incastellamento* model has been questioned, relativising its real impact on the process of formation of local seigneuries (Cortese 2010, 271; Molinari 2010, 315). Moreover, I sense that what we are seeing in the Basque Country may resemble the situation in Catalonia, as recently examined by J. Roig Buxó and J. M. Coll Riera in the Vallés region and by Iñaki Padilla in the Pyrenees (Roig Buxó and Coll Riera 2007; Padilla 1995–1996) and other Iberian regions. For all of these reasons, I would argue that the main challenge we face in this project is not so much in terms of modelling processes or questioning orthodoxies, as coming to understand the complexity of a multiplicity of solutions that coincided in a single territory.

Note

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15

The Southern Carolingian Frontier in Marca Hispanica along the River Ter: *Roda Civitas* and the Archaeological Site of L'Esquerda (Catalonia)[1]

Imma Ollich-Castanyer, Montserrat Rocafiguera-Espona and Maria Ocaña-Subirana

Introduction

L'Esquerda is an archaeological site in the interior of Catalonia in the north-east of the Iberian Peninsula, 70 km north of Barcelona (Fig. 15.1). The site occupies a central place in the county of Osona, a plateau surrounded by mountains along the basin of the River Ter. L'Esquerda is situated on a 12 hectare peninsula, on one of the meanders of the river at the north-east of the Plain of Vic. Its natural defences are a core element in understanding why the place formed such a remarkable fortress from late prehistory until the Late Middle Ages. As an archaeological site, L'Esquerda has been known since the 1920s. In the 1960s a group of amateur archaeologists discovered the Romanesque church and some graves and buildings around it. Since 1977, a multidisciplinary group led by the University of Barcelona has carried out scientific research here, including annual archaeological fieldwork. Currently, L'Esquerda is a Research Centre that can be visited, with ongoing annual excavations and university courses, and features an archaeological museum, a Centre of Experimental

Archaeology that works as a laboratory, and an Open Air-Museum, dedicated to archaeological research. Research projects are currently funded by Spanish Ministry of Culture and the archaeological research by the Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya.

The Site: Geographical and Historical Context

The distinctive setting of the site of L'Esquerda provides it with a natural defensive prospect, with cliffs of more than 50 m at the river-edge (Fig. 15.2); the only access point is in the north, which is where substantial fortifications were erected during its different phases of occupation.

To date, seven phases of occupation have been defined here. The site's origins lie in the Late Bronze Age (Phase 1), although only scattered potsherds and fragile traces of likely domestic structures belong to this period. In the Early Iberian period (6th–5th centuries BC), this became a stable settlement (Phase 2), though of uncertain scale and character (Rocafiguera *et al.* 2011/forthcoming). This was replaced by a strong *oppidum* towards the end of 5th century BC (Phase 3). This Iberian *oppidum* was much reinforced at the end of 3rd century during the Punic Wars and in subsequent Iberian revolutions (Phase 4). After that, the *oppidum* was completely demolished and an Iberian village was established here until the 1st century BC (Phase 5). However, the site was completely abandoned during the Roman occupation of the region, with the local settlement focus instead based at *Auso*, located under the modern city of Vic.

After the long period of Roman provincial stability (1st–4th centuries AD), and during Late Roman and Visigothic times, L'Esquerda was re-occupied, and the fortification rebuilt (Phase 6). The complex was especially important in Carolingian times (Phase 7). Later on, the site became a feudal village, established on the top of the hill around a pre-Romanesque church (Phase 8), and subsequently around a Romanesque church (Phase 9). At the end of 13th century the site began to decline and its inhabitants progressively transferred to the emergent modern township by the river, next to the bridge. A final historic event came on September 18th 1314, when L'Esquerda was definitively destroyed as a result of feudal conflict.

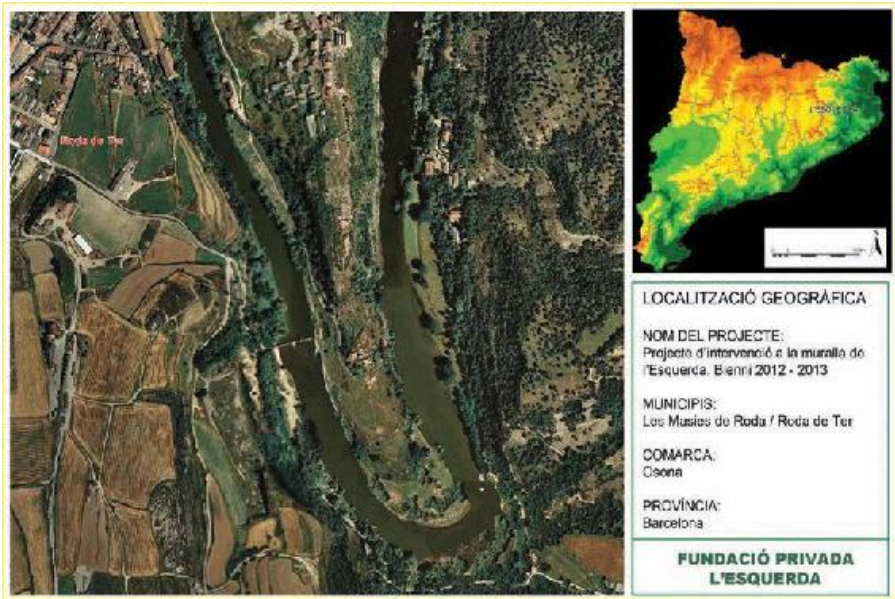

Figure 15.1. Map of Catalonia showing the site of L'Esquerda (Image: authors).

The Iberian Background

The importance of the site's Visigothic and Carolingian phases cannot be understood without an understanding of its Iberian past. In Iberian times, L'Esquerda formed a powerful *oppidum* (Fig. 15.3). Its defensive configuration featured at least three large solid towers (11 × 5.0 m) that protected a N–S running street; the towers were roughly made of local sandstone, built without mortar. At the back of these towers were set several large chambers, of uncertain function. The near-gridded organisation of the street plan of the *oppidum* in fact remained evident until the later feudal village was established (Ollich and Rocafiguera, 1992). In addition there is some evidence for a possible sanctuary on the top of the hill (Ollich, Rocafiguera and Amblàs, 2014), and finds of imported Greek pottery establishes that L'Esquerda was a central place in the territory of the *Ausetani* tribe.

In the late 3rd century BC, this fortress was significantly enlarged: the large towers of the *oppidum* were now attached to a sizeable, rough-built stone wall running from east to west on the northern side of the peninsula, to enhance the site's defensive capabilities. Potentially, the chronology of this new structure relates to events in the Second Punic War (218 BC), when the *Ausetani* fought alongside the Carthaginians against the Romans, and in fact played a critical

role; alternatively, the defences were modified during the subsequent Iberian uprisings against the invading forces. However, at some point in these upheavals, the entire fortress was burnt down and destroyed. While the site appears to have retained some sort of community, it came to be abandoned in the 1st century BC.

The Early Medieval Site: Visigothic Silos, the Extramural Cemetery and the Defences

The Visigothic-period silos

In the lower part of the site, just next to the fortress and post-dating the Iberian levels, an area with large numbers of grain storage pits has been discovered (Figs 15.4 and 15.5). A total so far of 66 pits has been excavated, but many more are expected, as the extension of the excavation work expands. Even though only the bottoms of these pits have been found, they evidently had different shapes – generally cylindrical or globular – with a flat or rounded base; they do not seem to have been lined internally (*e.g.* with wicker-work or clay), but the presence of flat stones at the bottom of sole silos suggested that these were former capping stones or covers. In specific cases, the silos exhibit regularity and formality, such as following NW–SE alignments, and being associated with structural remains such as walls, suggestive of domestic/communal roles. It can be accepted that these pits were used for grain-storage, since archaeobotanical analyses show that different cereals, chiefly wheat or barley, were stored inside. Nearly all the silos contained secondary deposits, of rubbish, with animal bones the main constituent.

Figure 15.2. Aerial view of L'Esquerda (Image: authors).

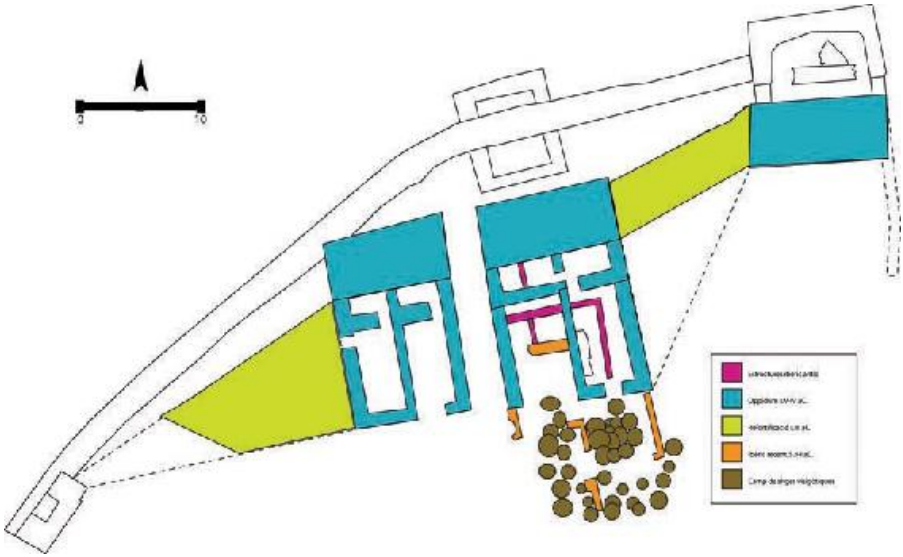

Figure 15.3. The Iberian structures of the oppidum at L'Esquerda (Image: authors).

The 'silos-field' at L'Esquerda clearly saw long-term use: some of the structures were already covered and disused for grain storage when new ones were built over them, partially destroying the earlier ones. This extended chronology is also shown by the ceramic finds, with evidence of late Roman ware and *amphorae*, hand-made local pottery, and 'spatulated' Carolingian pottery. Radiocarbon dating of the skeletal remains of a small pig found in pit 16 provided a date in the mid-7th century AD.

Figure 15.4. The silos found over/cutting through the Iberian levels at L'Esquerda (Image: M. Àngels Pujol).

The discovery of the silos at L'Esquerda was the first indication of a Visigothic phase of occupation at the site. The great number of the pits and their secondary use as rubbish dumps cannot be explained without the presence of a permanent settlement nearby.

The extramural cemetery

During excavations in 2012–2013 outside of the main external wall, a significant discovery was made: 13 burials, E–W oriented, arranged parallel to the wall (Figs 15.6 and 15.7). Some of the graves were cut directly into the sub-soil, and some others were lined with stones; burials were a mix of ages and sexes, as shown by anthropological examination (Díaz 2014). This was not a single-event cemetery, i.e. resulting from casualties in a battle, an execution or plague, but a permanent necropolis linked to a consistent population at L'Esquerda.

An absence of any items (dress-fittings, weapons, etc.) buried with the deceased required an absolute chronology had to be obtained from radiocarbon dating of bone materials. The results show that the *extramuros* necropolis at L'Esquerda was in use from the mid-7th century, thus commencing in the Visigothic period (Mestres, forthcoming) – a chronology that fits the relative chronologies

obtained from wider site finds.

There is a contrast, therefore, with the main necropolis which lies within the fortified area, gathered around the church site (with excavated pre-Romanesque and Romanesque phases) (Figs 15.8 and 15.9). This cemetery was in use from the mid-8th until the 14th century AD – a chronology also derived from radiocarbon dating. Thus the burial ground outside the main defensive wall seems to be earlier, and follows a more 'classical' placement in terms of being extramural, close to the gate and road. Perhaps the first inhabitants of L'Esquerda, perhaps the builders of the Visigothic-period curtain wall, consciously maintained this late Roman tradition. The simple burials here, lacking grave goods, do not seem to denote an aristocratic elite, but a working, peasant population, but perhaps one not yet Christian.

The Visigothic defensive wall

The archaeological fieldwork of 2012–2013 included the extensive excavation and restoration of the main outer or defensive wall of L'Esquerda, not only identifying the structure and its form, but also providing insights into the evolving role and importance of the site.

Figure 15.5. Detail of some of the storage pits at L'Esquerda (Image: authors).

Figure 15.6. Grave 264 from the extramural necropolis (Image: authors).

Figure 15.7. Grave 265 from the extramural necropolis (Image: authors).

Figure 15.8. The wall and the extramural necropolis. In the inner part, the remains of the Iberian fortifications and the early medieval pits (Image: authors).

Thus far, excavation has uncovered a 2.7 m wide wall traced for a length of almost 140 m (Figs 15.8 and 15.9). Preserved in places to between 2.0–4.0 m high, the barrier must have been very imposing: made of local stone and river cobble bonded with lime mortar, it was built in part over the remains of the demolished ancient Iberian *oppidum* wall. This is why in many points the walls do not reach the bedrock, but instead extend only down to the Iberian levels. In fact, many of the stones used to build the Visigothic-period wall were taken from the demolished *oppidum* walls, these located a few metres inside. Interestingly, the outer wall face was plastered, whereas the inner one was left rough and unequal.

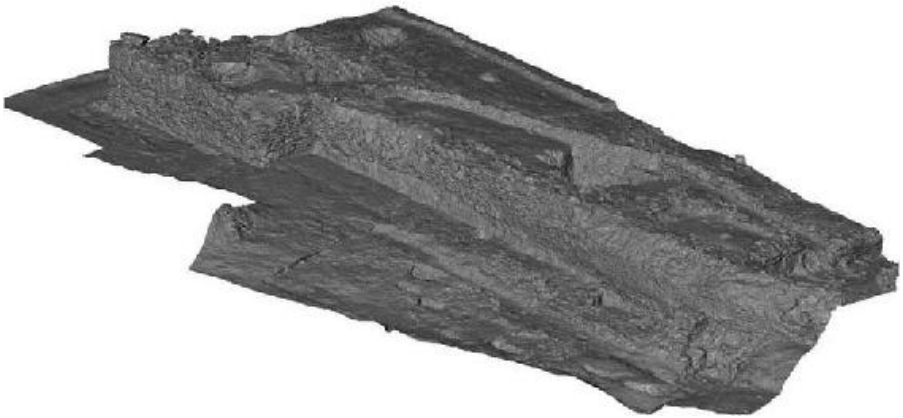

Figure 15.9. 3D laser-scan of the defensive wall and the extramural necropolis

No entrance has yet been identified along the excavated part of the wall. Since the geomagnetic surveys show that the wall likely extends further to the east, it is presumed therefore that an entrance lies in this part. No secure Visigothic-period towers are yet known for the thick – undoubtedly defensive – wall; those towers that have been excavated instead correspond to the Carolingian phase.

Combined, the evidence of the defensive barrier wall, the silos and the necropolis allow us to determine the presence of a permanent and clearly important settlement of Visigothic date at L'Esquerda. This settlement could be related to the *Roda Civitas* mentioned later documentary sources. The early medieval churches of Saint Peter, Saint Mary and Saint Michael in the site's environs are another indication of this Visigothic settlement. Its function cannot be easily determined: is it partly a defended replacement to the *Vicus Ausonensis*, the old Roman *Auso*, just 5 km to the south? Is it an official stronghold? Was it connected to possible threats from 7th-century Frankish Gaul? More work is obviously needed to clarify these questions.

Carolingian L'Esquerda: Archaeological and Documentary Evidence

Historically we can jump forward to the 9th century, when a Carolingian presence at L'Esquerda is directly corroborated by documents of the Royal Chancery in the reign of the Frankish king Louis the Pious (814–840), son of Charlemagne. The *Annales Regni*

Francorum mention that in the year 826 '*Ibi ad eius notitiam perlatum est de fuga ac perfidia Aizonis, quomodo fraudulenter Ausonam ingressus et a populo illo, quem dolo deceperat, receptus Rotam civitatem destruxit, castella eiusdem regionis, quae firmiora videbantur*' (*Annales Regni Francorum* DCCCXXVI; Ordeig 1981). This *Rota civitas* corresponds to the present site of L'Esquerda, and its destruction lies in the historical context of attacks against the Carolingian Franks that took place in Catalonia very early in the 9th century. Accordingly, our archaeological findings, structural and material, have high value in understanding the character of a Carolingian frontier fortress. These are summarised below.

The watch-tower bases

Our excavations at L'Esquerda have identified a number of post-holes and other marks cut into the bedrock, later overlain by feudal village structures. In particular such 'negative' traces have been found south of the church, indicating two circular structures of *c*. 5.0 m diameter; in one of these is a semi-circular area of fracturing in the rock, suggestive perhaps of a later burning of this. These remains are interpreted as bases of two possible timber-built watch-towers (see Ollich and Rocafiguera 2001). While cylindrical forms were first proposed (Fig. 15.10), experimental research currently in progress at L'Esquerda suggests that these towers could also have had a quadrangular shape (Ollich, Rocafiguera *et al*. in press).

Figure 15.10. The bases of the watch-towers, and a preliminary reconstruction, in circular form (Reconstruction by F. Riart; image by authors).

The wall and attached towers

As noted above, the recently discovered early medieval curtain wall runs from the cliffs overlooking the river and forms an E–W defence across the peninsula. Wall construction (throughout of good quality) seems to have been undertaken in sections of about 25 m each, with each one placed 1.0 m back with regard to the next one, as the entire wall makes a slight turn to the north-west, fitting carefully the site contours. Three towers (numbers 6, 3 and 5) have been identified, set *c*. 20 m apart, and there is evidence of at least two more; these are attached to the curtain wall exterior main construction, as evident in mortar traces; this also suggest that the towers were later additions. The stone-and-mortar built tower walls are 1.20–1.50 m thick and have base dimensions of *c*. 7.5 × 8.0 m (*c*. 60 m2 surface area); traces of 'frapping' or clay facing is evident in places. Best preserved is Tower 5, surviving to *c*. 5.0 m high in places (Fig. 15.11).

The configuration of the projecting towers meant that they featured fairly limited internal space. However, sediments inside the towers did yield sherds of Carolingian pottery, particularly that kind of pottery called *spatulated ceramic*, of the early 9th century AD

(Beltran de Heredia 2006); this lends support to the hypothesis of these towers relating to the first Carolingian advance and occupation of the site.

The material evidence

In 2012–2013, excavations around and inside the circuit towers recovered fragments of a very specific pottery ware: made of very thin, refined and maybe levigated clay, fired under oxidising conditions and with a spatulated finish on the external surface. These are the so-called *spatulated ceramics*, viewed as efforts to imitate ancient Roman *sigillatae*, but related also to Frankish/Carolingian productions near the Rhine, where most of the better-known items come from; finds at L'Esquerda are likely to be imports from the Rhine centres. One key find was the top of an almost complete spatulated vessel from near the south-west tower: this vessel, identified as a *sitra*, is in fact very similar to material found at the site of La Plaça del Rei in Barcelona, dated to the early 9th century AD (Beltran de Heredia 2006, 123).

One exceptional discovery comprises a silver *denarius* of Louis the Pious *(Ludovicus Pius*), King of the Franks (814–840), found near the main wall (Fig. 15.12). Its fine quality and rarity confirm the Carolingian presence at L'Esquerda (Clúa, forthcoming; Clúa *et al*. in prep):

> Denarius of Louis the Pious *(Ludovicus Pius*), silver, uncertain Carolingian mint, between 822–840.
> Front: +HLUDOVVICUS IMP
> Reverse: +XRISTIANA RELIGIO
> The front legend is set around a cross with four small circles in each quarter; the reverse legend surrounds a temple with four columns and a small cross inside.

This coin type is known as *'dénier à la légende chrétienne'*; they were coined in royal workshops in the Marches of the Carolingian Empire and used in the frontier zones, including the 'Marca Hispanica'. Although just one example, this find helps confirm the importance of l'Esquerda/*Roda Civitas*, and also raises new possibilities for the historical interpretation of the origins of Carolingian Catalonia.

The Carolingian Fortress of *Roda Civitas* and its Territory: The River Ter Frontier before AD 801

Ancient *Roda Civitas* is mentioned by Carolingian documents in AD 826. It was the central control point of a large territory along the basin of the River Ter. As noted, our archaeological excavations at L'Esquerda confirm the Visigothic origins of the peninsula fortress, in part drawing on the military tradition of the Iberian *oppidum* of the *Ausetani*, and the Late Roman defensive installation (a new wall built a few metres in front of the Iberian ruins). Here the concept of '*civitas*' must not be understood in an urban sense, but rather as a territorial and military organisation. *Roda Civitas* seems to have been a control centre, designed to oversee a vast tract of the northern landscape of the county of Osona, particularly along the Ter.

One core reason for the strategic significance of *Roda*-L'Esquerda is the river basin: the Ter runs from the northern Pyrenees, turns east in this area to the coast of Girona and the Mediterranean Sea. The river had always been a primary route of communication, trade and exchange with the northern Catalan coast, as indicated through ancient Greek pottery from Empúries (*Emporion*) and Athens found at L'Esquerda. Situated at the entrance of the mountains of Les Guilleries, exactly where the River Ter turns over to the east, *Roda*-L'Esquerda has visual dominance of the western part of the Vic Plain, from Pyrenees in the north to the Congost, a narrow valley in the south that conform the natural way between the Montseny and the Bertí cliffs. Our site, therefore, exhibits at least three natural features that explain its strategic importance and that enable its control of the landscape:

- A strongly elevated peninsula, with cliffs *c*. 50 m high dropping to the river, offering a 12 hectare space to accommodate a large population, and with just one access point from the north needing to be defended.
- A natural route of communication defined by the River Ter, that can be followed northwards through the basin to the Pyrenees, and eastwards to Girona and the Mediterranean coast.
- A very wide view of the surrounding landscape, enabling surveillance of communication routes – along the river Ter; along the old Roman routeway crossing the Plain of Vic from

south *(Barcino, Auso*) to north. Near to *Roda*, this road forks: one branch heads towards Ripoll and la Cerdanya, and the other through the mountains of Cabrerès to Coll d'Ares.

Figure 15.11. The circuit wall and Tower 5 (Image: authors).

These same factors no doubt contributed to a defended settlement here both in Iberian and late antique times; added value came in the Carolingian period since occupation here was part of Frankish political and military strategy of creating marches to protect the Empire's borders.

At the end of 8th century, Charlemagne, some years after the disaster of his military campaign against Zaragoza (*CaesarAugusta*) (*c*. 780) and the failure to create a permanent border against the Muslims at the River Ebro (*Iberus*), began a new offensive strategy: the aim was to permanently occupy most of the territories south of Pyrenees. In face of the strong Carolingian army, cities like Girona (AD 785) and la Seu d'Urgell (789), with their territories, surrendered, and in just a few years, most of the lands from Pyrenees to the coast formed part of the Christian Carolingian Empire. Administration of these conquered zones was delegated by Charlemagne to various counts (*comites* – Catalonian: *comtes*), designated to control particular parcels of land called comtats (*comitatus*).

Figure 15.12. Denarius of Ludovicus Pius, found at l'Esquerda during the 2012 excavation (Image: authors).

It is in *c*. AD 789 when the Count of la Cerdanya started his advance to the south, following Charlemagne's instructions. He occupied the central zone of present Catalonia (the counties of Berguedà, Ripollès, Bages and Osona), that were generally used by Muslims to cross the Pyrenees following the River Ter to the north and the territory of Narbonnaise. To prevent this route of Muslim penetration, the Carolingians had to control the river. It was not an easy undertaking, but they succeeded, and at the end of 8th century AD, the Carolingians had already established a border along the Ter, rebuilding ancient fortresses (named *castella, castellare* in the early medieval documents, which have to be always distinguished from *castra*, which referred to new military constructions of the 11th century AD). Moreover, they built a series of wooden watch-towers in high strategic points to allow surveillance of the river. And the central point, the prime garrison point for the army, is likely to have been *Roda*-L'Esquerda, which had the necessary conditions to organise and control the river's territory (Ollich 1999; 2004).

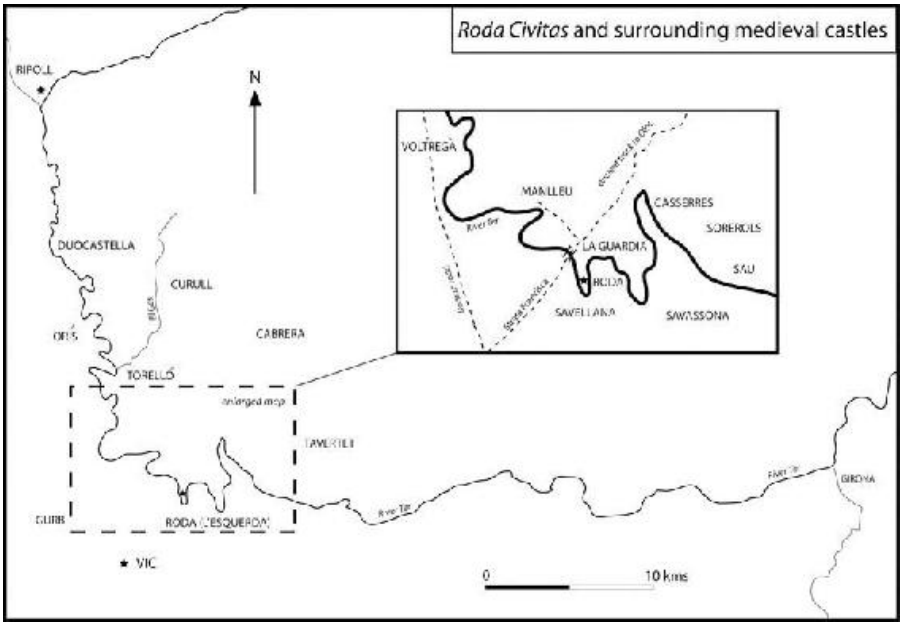

Figure 15.13. Roda Civitas and the castles around (Map by I. Ollich, redrawn by Debbie Miles-Williams).

Interestingly, most of the ancient fortified sites that were rebuilt and reused by the Carolingians saw reuse for centuries (Fig. 15.13). Following the line of the Ter from north to south to *Roda*-L'Esquerda, these include: castles at Orís, Duocastella, Besora, Torelló, Sarreganyada (Bellmunt), Milany, Cabrera, Voltregà, Manlleu and La Guàrdia. From L'Esquerda to the east: the castles of Savellana, Savassona, Casserres, Sant Llorenç del Munt and Querós. These castles generally also communicated with a network of watch-towers, allowing visual contact between them and key points of movement and control (*e.g.* La Roca del Purpiol, between L'Esquerda and the castles of Savellana and Savassona. While our archaeological project has provided a first mapping and survey of some of these sites, sadly none have as yet seen detailed or systematic investigation.

The importance of the castle of Casserres (the *Castle of Mountains*, named as *Castrum Serrarum* in early medieval documents) can be highlighted in this context. In the early 11th century, when its military function was lost, this was converted into a Benedictine monastery in the domain of the viscounts of Osona, who chose the place for their mausoleum (Soldevila 1999). The castle-monastery occupied a peninsula near L'Esquerda, with similar strategic

conditions: the river surrounded most of the site which need only defences at the sole access point. But there was no strong visibility of the surrounding landscape at this site. This is one of the places that were occupied by Carolingians at the west of Girona. At points on the riverside there are many post-holes cut in the bedrock that could correspond to ancient wooden structures. However, more detailed research is needed to identify the relationship with *Roda*-L'Esquerda and its function in the initial Carolingian strategy to control the line of the River Ter.

Beyond these castles, *Roda*-L'Esquerda had a direct visual contact over all the south-west zone of the Plana de Vic/Vic Plain, where the castles of Gurb, Tona, Centelles and Tagamanent were sited. According to our perception, the fact that *Roda*-L'Esquerda is placed in a privileged location explains why the site was chosen first by the Visigoths and later by the Carolingians to establish prime military bases. Besides its primary role to control the line of River Ter and the old Roman routeway against Muslim military penetration, the Frankish military presence had other notable objectives, namely to defend Girona from 785 and to control the central territory of Catalonia, so they could organise the conquest and occupation of Barcelona, which was completed in 801. Once Barcelona was captured, the first line of the Carolingian frontier advanced to the River Llobregat, meaning that the River Ter became a secondary defence line to counter Muslim raiders aiming to cross the Pyrenees. And *Roda Civitas* continued as a critical point in the Carolingian defences of *Marca Hispanica*: a few decades later, when anti-Frankish revolts began, *Roda*-L'Esquerda was destroyed and conquered (AD 826) by Ayssun, son of the last *wali* of Barcelona, who from there started a series of attacks against all Carolingian positions.

Conclusions

The recent archaeological excavations at the site of L'Esquerda in central Catalonia have shown the importance of the place in the early medieval and Carolingian era as a central, strategic and military settlement. Its historic roots are, we argue, highly significant: the place was a notable *oppidum* in the Iberian period, inhabited by the *Ausetani*, but destroyed during the Second Punic War. It was seemingly deserted under Roman Empire when the city of *Auso* was

founded 5 km to the south. While in the Late Roman period L'Esquerda saw re-occupation, in the subsequent Visigothic era a large fortress was imposed over the destroyed Iberian site. This was very likely the *Roda Civitas* mentioned by early medieval documents.

In the late 8th century the Carolingian army took possession of the site (it remains to be clarified if it was abandoned or still active prior to this takeover, but our supposition is that it had not been abandoned), using and transforming the Visigothic structures: for example, the 140+ m long and 2.70 m thick barrier or defensive wall was remodelled with squared projecting towers, attached every 20 m. L'Esquerda-*Roda Civitas* became the centre of a network of fortifications (castles, fortressess and watch-towers) along the River Ter. The main aim was to defend the hinterland of Girona, to control access to the Pyrenees and to help facilitate the conquest of Barcelona. Therefore, the Ter was the earliest frontier of the *Marca Hispanica*, and *Roda Civitas*, identified as the site of L'Esquerda, was its central place.

After the fall of Barcelona in 801, the frontier was extended towards the River Llobregat. Nonetheless all these fortified places along the River Ter continued as a second line of Carolingian fortifications, and many become stable settlements. This was the territory affected by Ayssun's uprising in 826, mentioned in *Annali Regni Francorum*.

All this development process of the first *Marca Hispanica* in the south of Pyrenees was part of the strategic policy of Charlemagne to protect and secure the borders of his new Empire. Arguably, therefore, *Roda Civitas*-L'Esquerda played a critical role in the Carolingian construction of a renewed Christian Europe.

Note

1 This paper is part of the Project CARFRONTER: *Defence Systems in the First Carolingian Frontier South of the Pyrenees. Experimental Archaeology Applied to the Knowledge of Early and High Medieval Poliorcetics along the River Ter*, funded by DGICYT – the Ministry of Culture of Spain, for the years 2013–15 (Project HAR2012-36497), and developed by the University of Barcelona. The authors wish to thank Dr Esther Travé for her suggestions and linguistic corrections and Dr Neil Christie for other amendments.

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Part IV

Mediterranean and Adriatic Europe

16

The Western Black Sea Coast in the 8th–10th Centuries: How and How Much was it Defended?

Rossina Kostova[1]

Introduction

The study of medieval defences along the western coast of the Black Sea constitutes a part of the broader topic on medieval fortifications and defensive system in the Eastern Balkans. In fact, however, no single monograph has yet been written about fortresses along the entire length of the coast; instead, the majority of studies, consciously or not, deal either with the administrative division of the coastal area throughout the Late Roman period (*e.g.* Scorpan 1980; Suceveanu 1992; Torbatov 2002) or with the modern division of the western coast between Romania, Bulgaria (*e.g.* Dimitrov 1975; Ovcharov 1982; Soustal 1991; 1992) and Turkey (*e.g.* Dirimtekin 1963; Pralong 1987; Kountoura 1997; Külzer 2008)[2].

The historical geography of the area, however, offers important scope to explore the characteristics of early medieval fortifications in this particular region of south-eastern Europe. This is a zone of high historical interest: between the 4th and late 6th centuries AD the northern part of the western Black Sea coast was a frontier zone, connected to the Danube *limes*, and, as such, it belonged to one of the most frequent 'corridors' of penetration of 'barbarians' into the Eastern Roman Empire. Later, between the 8th and late 10th centuries, the northern part of the western Black Sea littoral formed part of the

heartland of the First Bulgarian Empire, while the southernmost part of the coast belonged to the Thracian hinterland of Constantinople, the greatest urban centre of the Eastern Mediterranean (Kostova 2008a). Thus, the ambiguity and the shifts in the politico-military appearance of the western coast of the Black Sea across the 6th–10th centuries AD can provide a strongly informative case study of trends in the defensive systems and strategies in the course of the transition from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

The Legacy of the Late Roman Empire

The disintegration of the Late Roman defensive system in the Balkans resulted mainly from the invasions of Goths and Huns in the last quarter of the 4th century and the first half of the 5th. The large scale construction programme attempted by the Eastern Roman emperor Anastasius I (491–518) in fact marked a new beginning in the development of the system of provincial defence here including coastal fortified sites (Torbatov 2002, 424–425). While in some cases a reinforcement of existing fortresses was made (*e.g. Histria*, modern Istria, Romania; *Mesembria*, mod. Nesebăr; *Agathopolis*, mod. Ahtopol, Bulgaria – see Venedikov 1969, 125–163; Soustal 1991, 355), the general trend was the construction of new fortified sites along the coast. This policy must be explained through the fact that the Black Sea played an exclusive role in providing the most secure supply-line for food and logistics for the military units in the provinces of *Haimimontos* and *Scythia* in that time. Only a few of the newly established fortified sites, however, were initially charged with military functions (*e.g.* Balchik-Horizont, Bulgaria); instead, the majority were founded as civilian settlements, as for instance *Bizone* (Kavarna), Shkorpilovtsi (region of Varna) in Bulgaria, and *Derkos* (modern Terkos or Durusu, Turkey) (Torbatov 2002, 173–174, 220–226, 242–250; Ovcharov 1982, 25; Külzer 2008, 106). Some of the ancient *poleis* were also endowed with new defensive walls (*e.g. Sozopolis*, mod. Sozopol, Bulgaria and *Medeia*, mod. Midye or Kıyıköy, Turkey) (Soustal 1991, 454; Pralong 1988, 186–192; Crow 2001, 103–104).

The next significant contribution to the development of the defensive system in the territory was made under Justinian I (527–565) in the mid-6th century AD in the form of a network of fortresses

(*castella*), similar in plan and size, located mostly along the northern part of the coastline (*Carea*, cape Shabla and Balchik-Tuzlata – see Torbatov 2002, 426–430) (Fig. 16.1). On the basis of both the textual and the archaeological data, the emperor also paid attention to the (re-)fortification of the old coastal *poleis* (Fig. 16.2). Thus, according to Procopius, ancient *Anchialos* (mod. Pomorie, Bulgaria) was fully fortified, while archaeological studies have revealed contemporary, partial restorations of walls and towers in towns such as *Tomis* (mod. Constanţa, Romania), *Callatis* (mod. Mangalia, Romania), *Bizone* (mod. Kaliakra, Bulgaria), and *Mesembria* (Velkov 1977, 191–197; Soustal 1991, 176–177; Beševliev 1964, nos. 152–168).

The second half of the 6th century witnessed the last efforts at maintaining the defensive system along the western sea coast, with repairs to some of the fortresses. However, by that time dykes and moats emerge as an innovative component in the fortification of some sites (*e.g. Histria* and *Argamum*, Romania).

The breakdown of this system came with the intensive Avar–Slav incursions of the 580s. The lack of a permanent and active military unit in the region to counter effectively these raids from over the Danube *limes* and to coordinate resistance against the invaders doomed the fortified sites both along the northern part of the coast (from the Danube delta to cape Emona) and inland by the early 7th century. The maritime hegemony of Byzantium in the Black Sea enabled the survival of some coastal *poleis/castra* in the province of *Scythia*, such as *Histria*, *Tomis*, *Callatis* and Balchik-Horizont, perhaps until the late 7th century (Torbatov 2002, 430–431). For the end of the 6th century, to the south of cape Emona, repairs to forts are attested only at *Messembria*. In the course of the Avar–Slav raid into Thrace in AD 584, *Anchialos* was captured and briefly became a residence of the Avar *khagan* (Venedikov 1969, 125–163; *Cronica di Monemvasia*, 8; Theophylacti Simocattae, *Historiae*, 44–47, 51–53).

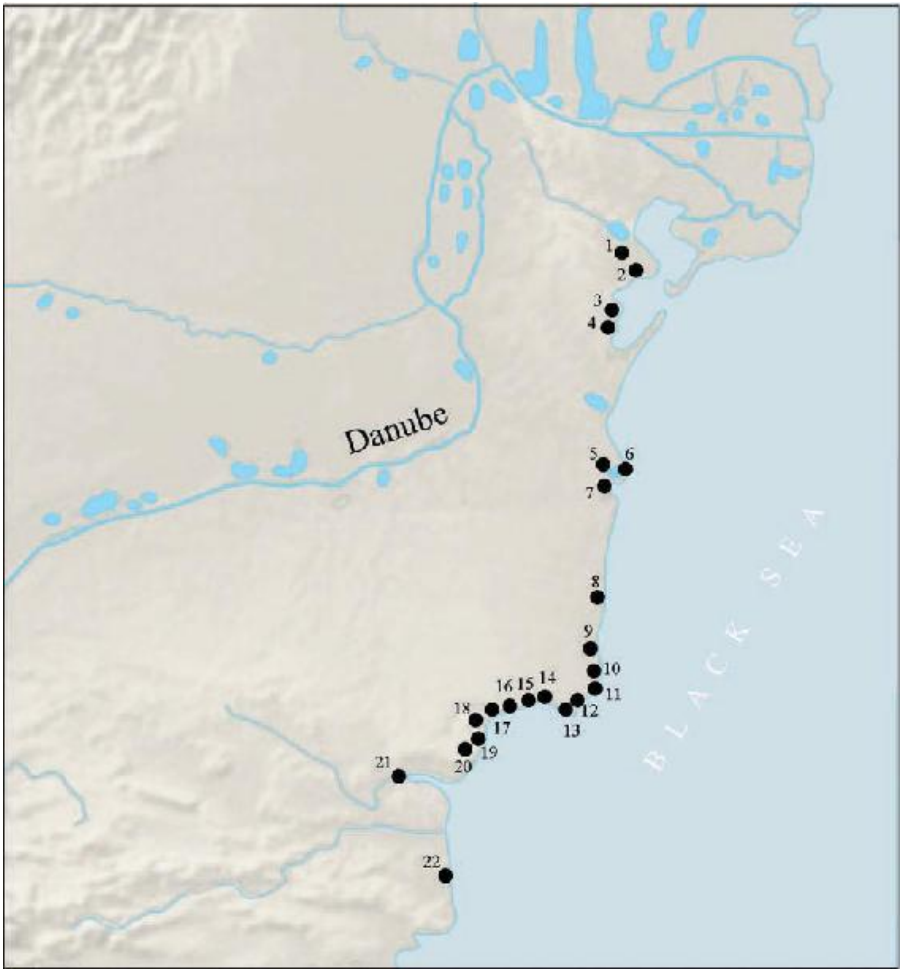

Figure 16.1. Early Byzantine fortresses along the northern part of the western coast of the Black Sea, mid-6th century AD (Map after Kostova 2008b, fig. 3): 1. Enisala-I; 2. Argamum; 3. Istria; 4. Histria; 5. Ovidiu-II; 6. Mamia; 7. Tomis; 8. Callatis; 9. Carea; 10. Kamen bryag-Yaylata; 11. Kamen bryag-Toprak kale; 12. Sv. Nikola; 13. Tirissa/ Acres; 14. Timum; 15. Timum-West; 16. Bizone; 17. Aphrodision; 18. Balchik-Tuzlata; 19. Dionysopolis; 20. Balchik-Horizont; 21. Odessos; 22. Shkorpilovtsi.

Fortifications along the Western Coast of the Black Sea in the 8th to 10th Centuries

The establishment and expansion of the Bulgarian State both north and south of the Danube in the late 7th century led to a radical change in the demographic and strategic appearance of the Eastern Balkans in general, affecting also the entire area of the western coast of the Black Sea. As clearly stated by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (945–969), while describing the route of Russian merchants to

Constantinople via the Black Sea in the mid-10th century, the Bulgarians controlled the coastline from the Danube estuary down to that of the River Kamchiya (*Ditzina*). The annual trading route of the Russian ships included two stops in the Danube delta, but neither of these was a port site, nor fortified. The first stop was at *Selinas* (Σελινάς), identified with Sulina, the present middle branch of the Danube estuary; the second was at *Konopas* (Κωνοπάς), to be identified either with St George Island between the Sulina and St George branches, or with Dranov Island between the St George branch and Lake Razelm (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 56; Kostova 2006, 584–586).

There is no strong reason to believe that any Byzantine fortress along the northern part of the western coast remained active between the end of the 7th century and the late 10th. However, although the Bulgarians did not exploit the advantages of the coast by failing to develop a navy or commercial fleet, they did pay attention to defending the northern part of the coast against possible landings by Byzantine troops. Thus, between the 8th and early 9th century five earth dykes were installed at the most vulnerable places, such as the low terraces at the river mouths (Fig. 16.3). All of the dykes were in fact sited next to deserted Early Byzantine fortresses, but without making use of their defences; for instance, the dyke at Shkorpilovtsi even ran over the eastern wall of the fortress (Rashev 1982, 32–50). The most interesting case, however, relates to the port city of *Odessos*, south of which was set out the longest dyke in the coastal area. Furthermore, in the period under consideration, the name *Odessos* was gradually replaced by Varna, a new toponym of a Slavic origin. More precisely, the written sources reflect the development of the name of Varna from a hydronym through a place name, referring to the surroundings of ancient *Odessos* and the settlements arranged there and, finally, to a common settlement name. Indeed, in light of the archaeological and numismatic evidence, a considerable number of settlements (15 so far) from the 8th–10th centuries as well as large cemeteries (six) from the same period can be identified in *Odessos'* hinterland (*c*. 10–15 km radius of the city); in contrast, life within the walls of the ancient city seemingly only re-emerged in the late 10th century (Pletnyov 2008, 43–181, 303–311).

Figure 16.2. Early Byzantine fortresses along the southern part of western coast the Black Sea, 5th–6th centuries AD: 1. Cape Emine; 2. Mesembria; 3. Anchialos; 4. Antheia; 5. Sozopolis; 6. Agathopolis; 7. Kanstritzion; 8. Medeia; 9. Derkos (Image after Kostova 2008b, fig. 4).

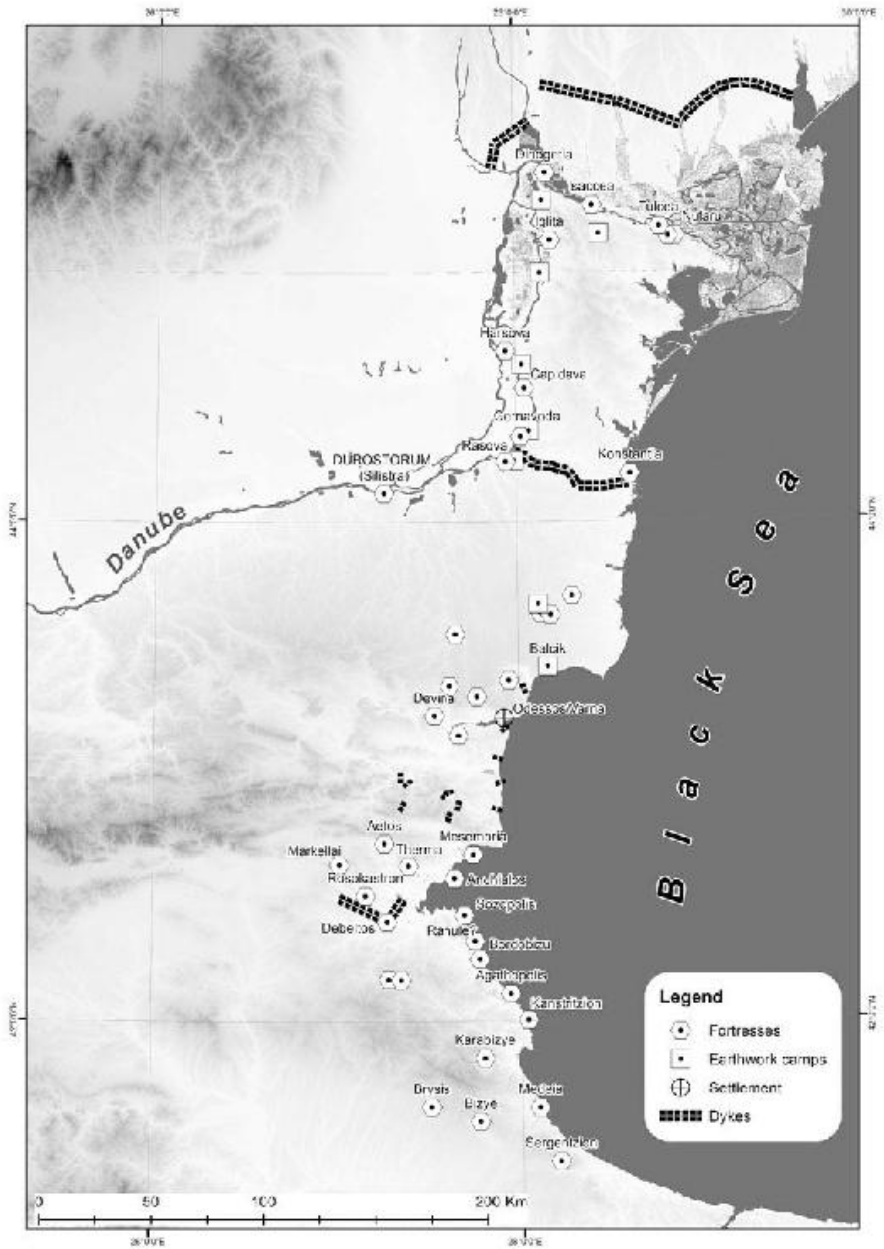

Figure 16.3. Fortifications along the western coast of the Black Sea, 8th–10th centuries AD (Drawing by author).

One can observe that the disposition of these coastal dykes was a part of the overall strategy of defence by the Bulgarians in the 8th–9th centuries, since they employed the same type of fortification in all the key areas of the newly founded State. As shown on Figure 16.3, in

addition to the coastal dykes, the State's north-eastern zone was defended by extensive dykes situated to the north and south of the Danube estuary. However, the particular functions of the dykes varied from area to area. Thus, those to the north of the Danube estuary outlined the edge of demographic expansion of the Bulgarian settlements; the two dykes and the stone wall along the axes from Cernavoda to Constanţa in Dobrudzha defended the heartland of the Bulgarian State to the north east; and the coastal dykes apparently had a more preventive function, seeking, as noted, to impede possible landings by Byzantine troops (Rashev 1982, 121–125; 1995, 89–95).

Yet the documentary sources suggest that the coastal dykes failed to prove any real efficacy in actual military campaigning. The Byzantine emperor Constantine V Copronymus (741–775) attempted in total nine campaigns against the Bulgarians in the second half of the 8th century, five of which were directed from the sea, while two were undertaken by both sea and land. It is noteworthy that in the course of three of the campaigns (those of AD 756, 763 and 773), ships were required to ferry troops directly to the Danube estuary. They managed to do that only once: in AD 756 a full 500 ships entered the estuary and set fire to the riverbanks (Beševliev 1971, 7–17). Seemingly, the Byzantines did not feel badly threatened at the estuary; but we do not hear of any ports or Byzantine naval bases to the north of cape Emine that might have facilitated their troop landings.

Quite different, however, was the situation to the south of *Haemus* (Stara planina) (see Fig. 16.4). As a unit of the military district or theme of *Thrakia* (at the end of the 7th century) and of the theme of Macedonia (end of the 8th century), *Mesembria* remained under Byzantine control (Gjuzelev 1978, 50–59; Soustal 1991, 335–359). From the sigillographic evidence the city was governed by an *archon* in the 8th century (Jordanov 2003, 118; Jordanov 2006, 43–44) and it served as a primary naval and military base for mustering Byzantine troops for campaigns against Bulgaria (Beševliev 1971, 7–17). In AD 812 the troops of the Bulgarian khan Krum seized *Mesembria*, but could not retain it for long; most likely, it was recaptured by the Byzantines in 864 in the course of campaigns by Michael III (842–867) by land and by sea. Only the seals of *kleisourarchai* of *Mesembria* – a total of four specimens found in Preslav and *Develtos*

(mod. Debelt) – provide evidence for the intensification of the strategic importance of the city by that time (Jordanov 2003, 119–120, nos. 47.1–3; Jordanov 2006, 193–195). As a *kleisoura*, an administrative unit with explicit military functions subordinated directly to the emperor, *Mesembria* functioned as a negotiator in settling border disputes between the Byzantines and Bulgarians from the mid-9th century to the first decades of the 10th. The change in the city's administrative rank may explain the attention given to maintaining the urban fortifications as testified by an inscription noting the restoration of the city 'from its foundations' by Basil I (867–886). Indeed, some of the brickwork repairs to the city walls are dated to the last quarter of the 9th century and might well relate to this Basilian rebuilding activity (Beševliev 1964, 106–107, no. 157; Oikonomides 1981; 1984; 1985, 269–273; Venedikov 1969, 155–163). In the course of the establishment of Byzantine power over the Bulgarian lands in the last quarter of the 10th century, *Mesembria* was made a *strategeia* (Jordanov 2006, 196).

Similar was the fate of *Anchialos*. Throughout the 8th century the fortress' port and its surroundings became an arena of frequent clashes between the Byzantine army (both land troops and navy) and the Bulgarians. Captured by khan Krum in AD 812 and annexed to Bulgarian territory according to the Byzantine–Bulgarian peace treaty from 815, *Anchialos* was restored to the Byzantines in 864 but subsequently lost to the Bulgarians in campaigns between AD 894–904. The last mention of the coastal fortress relates to the bitter battle in 917 at the river *Acheloos* (mod. Aheloi) in the vicinity of *Anchialos*. Despite the Byzantine defeat, it is unclear who controlled the fortress until the end of the 10th century (Beševliev 1971, 7–17; Theophanis, *Chronographia*, 382, 432–433, 437, 456–457, 495–496; Theophanes, *continuatus*, 389; Gjuzelev 1992, 23–33; Soustal 1991, 175–177).

From a strategic viewpoint, *Mesembria* and *Anchialos* appear to have been the most important and, therefore, the most heavily contested defended ports along the western coast of the Black Sea between the 8th and 10th century. The reasons for this lay not only in their proximity to Constantinople and the natural advantages of their bays, but also in their location close to the eastern and most accessible part of *Haemus*. The seven passes through this part of the mountain range were regular corridors for Byzantine attacks on Pliska, the

residence of the Bulgarian khans then, and the heartland of the Bulgarian State in general. Accordingly, the Bulgarians tried to impede any advances by Byzantine troops by arranging earthen dykes at three of the most frequent passes – Dyulinski, Aitoski and Rishki (Rashev 1982, 50–61) (Fig. 16.4).[3]

The southernmost line of defence for the Bulgarians comprised their longest ever dyke, the so-called Erkesiya, running a full 142 km (Figs 15.4 and 15.5). Commencing from the bank of Maritsa River to the north of the fortress of *Konstanteia* and ending at the bank of Lake Burgas, almost on the coast itself, its construction must belong to between 812 and 814; it is generally accepted that it defined the border zone between Byzantium and Bulgaria, established by then as a result of the successful campaigns of the khan Krum (Rashev 1982, 61–65; Rashev 2007, 120–127; Georgiev 2007, 192–206).

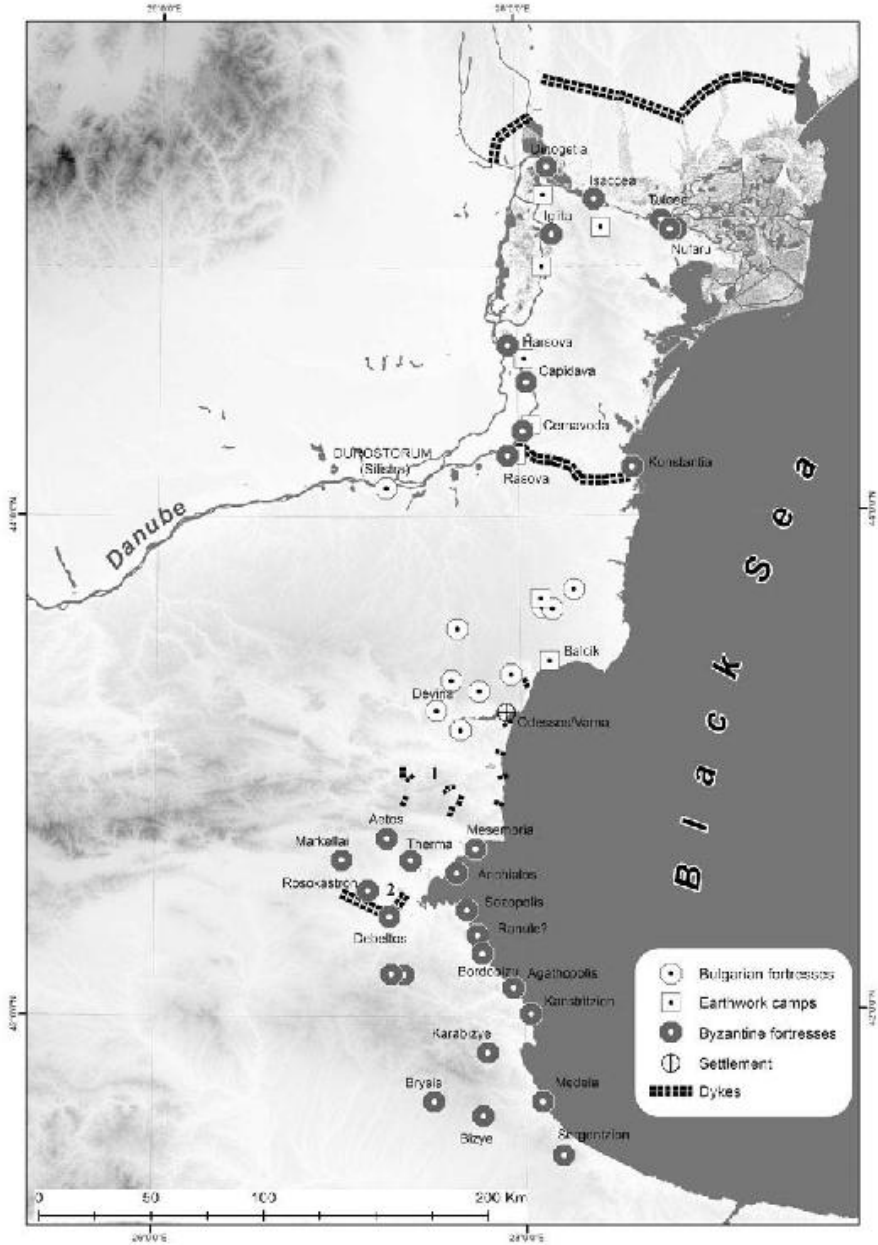

Figure 16.4. Bulgarian and Byzantine fortifications along the western coast of the Black Sea, 8th–10th centuries. 1. Dykes in the easternmost passes of Haemus; 2. The eastern part of the dyke of Erkesiya (Drawing by author).

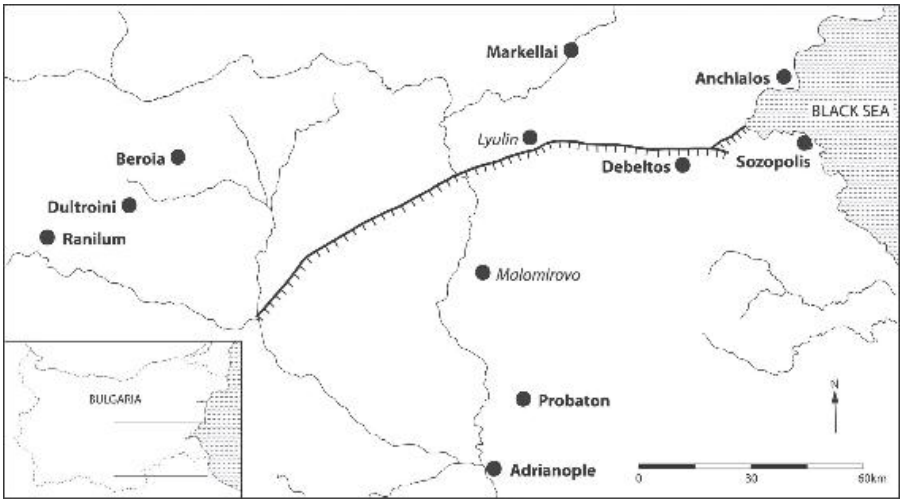

Figure 16.5. The layout of the dyke of Erkesiya (Image after Rashev 2007, fig. 2, redrawn by Michael A. Hawkes).

This period also saw *Sozopolis* incorporated into Bulgarian territory. However, by the terms of the peace treaty of AD 815, it was returned to Byzantium, since the revised political/military boundary was traced from *Debeltos* to the surroundings of Adrianople. From that moment the administrative and military rank of *Sozopolis* as a fortress-post against Bulgaria developed very rapidly, changing from a *tourma* of the theme of *Thrakia* in the 820–840s to a *kleisoura* from the mid-9th century, as revealed by seals of the town's governors (Jordanov 2003, 160, no. 74.1; Jordanov 2008, 114–115). However, *Sozopolis* was annexed back to Bulgaria after the battle at *Acheloos* in 917 and its status was confirmed by the Byzantine–Bulgarian peace treaty from 927 (Beševliev 1964, 186–193, no. 47; 164–175, no. 41; Soustal 1991, 454–456). Finally, sometime in the late 10th century, it must have returned to Byzantine control, since the seal of a certain Leon *protokentarchos* of *Sozopolis* indicates the presence of a Byzantine fleet unit based there by that time (Jordanov 2003, 160).

One other coastal fortress, *Agathopolis*, must have numbered among those fortresses captured by the khan Krum in his campaign in AD 812 and remained under Bulgarian control until 971. However, the arguments for such a conclusion are based on circumstantial evidence in the written sources (see Soustal 1991, 168–169). More secure evidence exists for *Medeia*: in sources between the 8th and 10th centuries it is referred to as 'a fortress (κάστρον) near Bulgaria',

noticeably used mostly for the exile of prominent Byzantines (Kountoura 1997, 282–285).

Campaigns under Emperor John I Tsimiskes (969–976) against the Rus' led to the Byzantine occupation of the eastern territories of medieval Bulgaria (mod. north-eastern Bulgaria, Dobrudzha, and north-eastern Thrace) in AD 970–971. Emperor Basil II (976–1025) completed the total subjugation of Bulgaria in 1018. The Byzantines in fact managed to keep the Danube as an effective frontier of their Empire until the end of the 12th century, when a revolt headed by Bulgarian noblemen started the restoration of the Bulgarian State.

Figure 16.6. The main gate of the fortress of Mesembria (Source: http://historicalcities.narod.ru/Galeri/Nesebar_geleri.htm [accessed July 2008]).

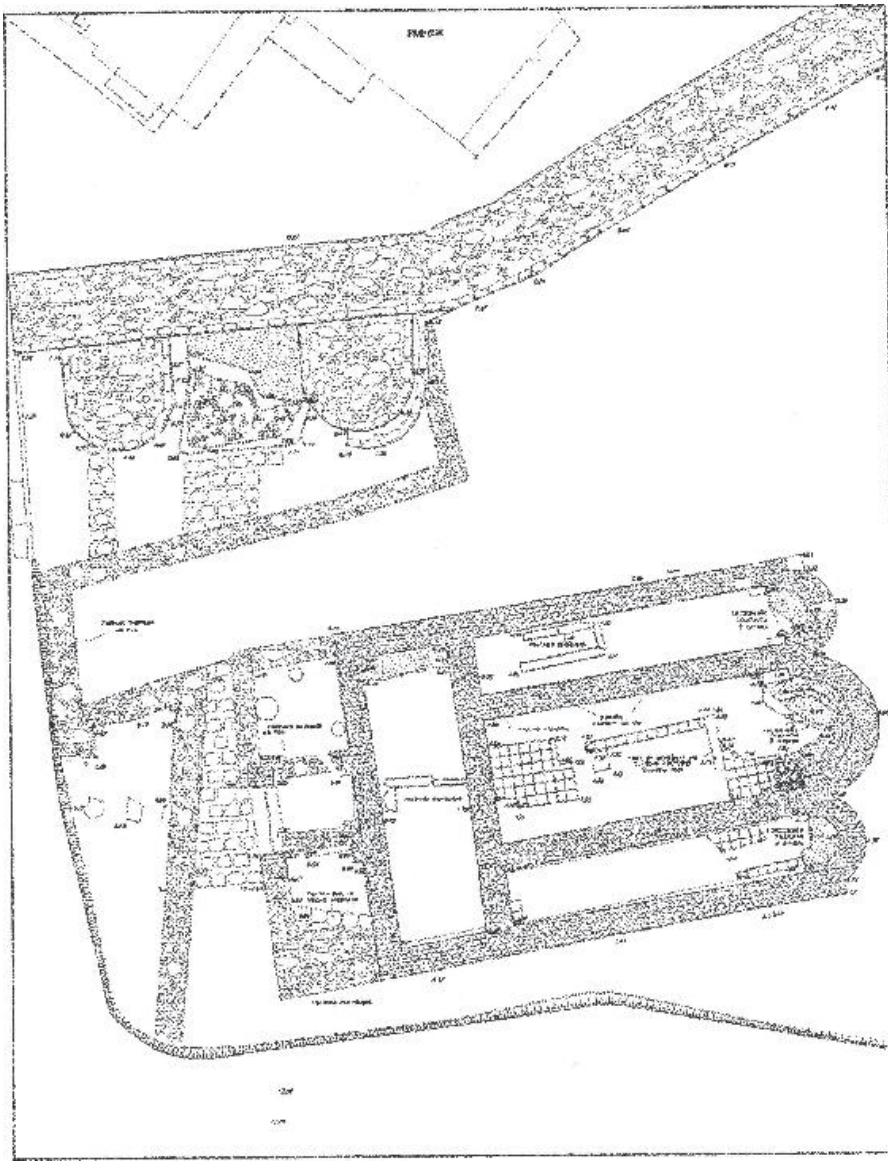

Figure 16.7. The southern gate of Sozopolis and the church in front of it (Image after Drazheva 2012, fig. 1).

Throughout that time period the Byzantines dominated the whole western coast of the Black Sea. However, between the Danube estuary and cape Emona only two new fortresses were established (Fig. 16.4). It is generally accepted that reference to *Konstantia* (Κωνστάντια) in *De Administrando Imperio* is the earliest appearance of the name of the settlement/s which replaced ancient *Tomis* from the 8th century onwards (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 63;

Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1991, 299–327). Yet the importance of this fortress becomes evident only in the late 10th century from passages in the historians Scylitzes and Zonaras referring to the envoys sent from *Konstantia* and other '*phrouria*' (i.e. fortresses) on the Danube to John I Tzmikes as he besieged *Dristra* (mod. Silistra) in AD 971 (Ioannis Scylitzae, *Synopsis historiarum*, 301; Ioannis Zonarae, *Epitome historiarum*, 530; see Kostova 2008a, 28–29). Further down, the fortress of Varna, which occupied a part of the area of ancient *Odessos*, was most likely, on the basis of the sigillographic evidence, built after the 1050s when a governor (*strategos*) of Varna (Βάρνας) had already been appointed (Wassiliou and Seibt 2004, 289, no. 304; Jordanov 2003, 45, no.15.1; Kostova 2008a, 29). In fact, the Byzantines preferred to revive the Danube *limes* since the main threats they faced after the end of the 10th century came from its north.

Fortresses along the Western Coast: Topography, Layout and Construction

Due to their settlement history, the fortifications along the western coast of the Black Sea differ in topography and size. While the ancient cities and some of the ancient fortified settlements (*e.g. Anchialos*) were situated in relation to the comfortable bays enabling both naval access and commercial navigation, the later fortified sites occupied steep and rocky hilltops, peninsulas and capes cut into the sea (*Agathopolis*). Respectively, the size of the fortified area varied from 60 ha (*Tomis*) and 30 ha (*Odessos*) in the oldest sites to roughly 1 ha in the later military fortresses (*burgi, castella*).

In terms of layout, one can distinguish two types of fortified sites. To the first belong sites where the defensive walls enclosed the entire area following the specifics of the terrain (*Mesembria*), thus producing an irregular layout; and in the second type only the side/sides providing access to the fortress were defended by a wall (*e.g. Anchialos*, *Agathopolis*).

The main element of the fortification of both categories of sites is the curtain wall. One of the basic requirements for the construction of the Early Byzantine fortresses in general was ensuring sufficient depth to the substructure of the walls (3.0–3.5 m); this was especially important for most forts along the western coast of the Black Sea,

since most were sited on steep terrain, thus risking subsidence. The average wall thickness varied between 1.5 and 3.0 m, while the height reached *c*. 10 m (those of *Mesembria* are still preserved to a height of 8.0 m) (Ovcharov 1982, 34–35).

In terms of gate design, since the 5th–6th centuries the coastal fortresses usually featured a single gate arranged in several manners: firstly, gates flanked by two towers (e.g. *Odessos, Mesembria*, Fig. 16.6, and *Sozopolis*, Fig. 16.7); secondly, gates defended by a single tower set close by (*e.g.* Sv. Nikola); and thirdly, gates defended by towered passages (*e.g.* Kamen brjag-Jaylata, Fig. 16.8, and Škorpilovtsi). Some of the fortresses also had posterns, frequently set in the pentagonal and triangular towers (*e.g. Mesembria*) (Ovcharov 1982, 37–38, 43; Drazheva 2012, 471–473).

The development of siege techniques in the Early Byzantine period impacted on the shape of the towers: while the projecting rectangular towers, typical of the previous period, were still in use, more frequently towers showed a less regular layout and varied in size and position along the walls – at the corners (*Caria*), along the curtain (*e.g. Argamum*, *Histria*, *Callatis*, Kamen brjag-Jaylata, Fig. 16.8, Sv. Nikola)[4], and flanking the gates (*e.g. Tomis*, Balčik-Horizont). Most frequently, the rectangular towers were combined with round, polygonal and U-shaped towers (*e.g. Tirissa/Acres*, Fig. 16.9, *Sozopolis*, Fig. 16.7). In fact, pentagonal towers marked the final phase in the development of the polygonal towers in the mid-5th century (Crow 2001, 102–105); usually they were arranged along the curtain, projecting 5–10 m (*e.g. Mesembria*, *Medeia*). The garrisons were sheltered in barracks usually attached to one of the gate towers (*e.g. Tirissa/Acres*, *Bizone*) (Ovcharov 1982, 49–50).

The re-utilisation of many Early Byzantine fortresses in the Middle Ages did not greatly modify their basic form. Instead, medieval repairs to walls, gates and towers generally differ clearly in technique from the original construction, and so provide good evidence for the maintenance of the fortifications across the centuries. The majority of the Byzantine fortresses were built in *opus implectum*; only the fortress of *Mesembria* was built in *opus mixtum* (Sasselov 1992, 227–233) and only the curtains and towers of the fortress of *Medeia* were brick-built (see Crow 2001, 103–104). However, brickwork was also employed in repairs to the curtain wall next to the gate of *Mesembria* at the end of

the 9th century.

Unfortunately, the interiors of the majority of the coastal fortresses remain unexcavated and so we do not yet have a clear idea about their arrangement in both the Byzantine and medieval periods. One exception is *Mesembria*, where *thermae* and churches have been unearthed. The baths are situated in the lowest northern part of the peninsula and consisted of an *apodyterium*, central hall and three heated rooms supplied with basins (Fig. 16.10); built in the 5th–6th centuries, these *thermae* survived a number of reconstructions, eventually being destroyed after the city's capture by khan Krum in AD 812 and subsequently being built over by domestic buildings. The latest structures attested there are two kilns for burning marble decoration taken from the baths (Chimbuleva 1988, 577–584).

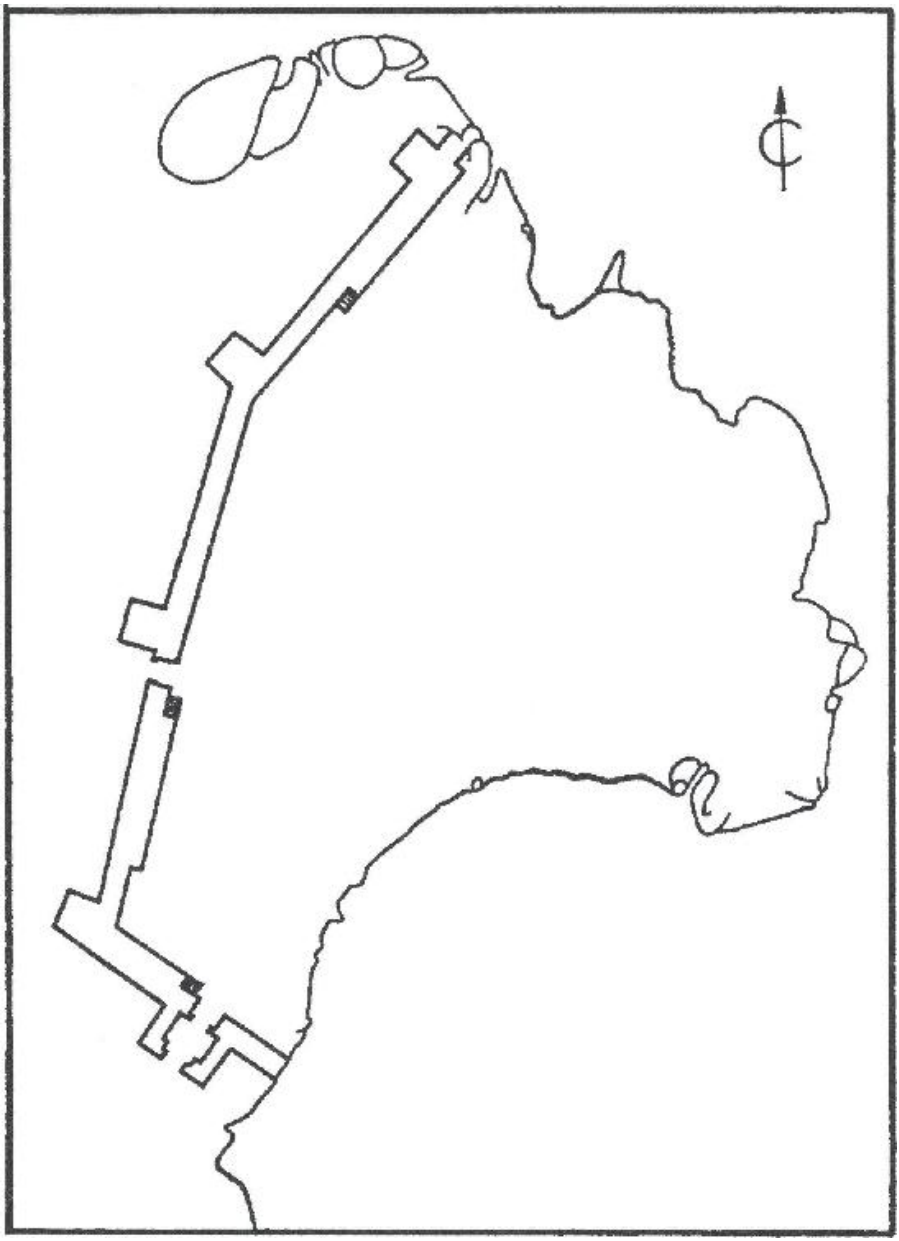

Figure 16.8. The fortress of Kamen bryag-Jaylata (Image after Torbatov 2002, fig. 42).

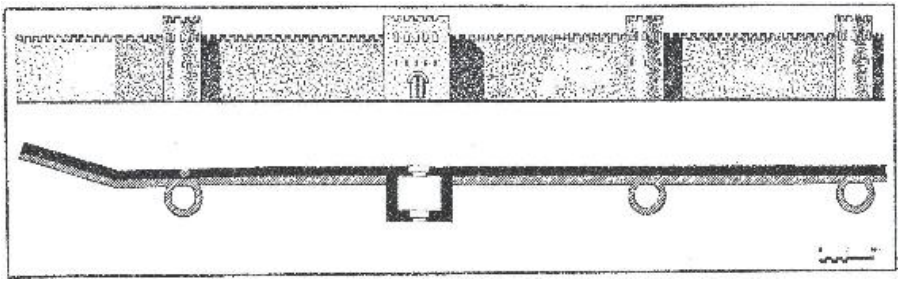

Figure 16.9. Tirissa/ Acres. The middle defence line (Image after Torbatov 2002, fig. 51).

Mesembria also features a number of churches, three of which are identified as monuments from the 5th–6th centuries, two of which survived into the Early Middle Ages.[5] One is the so-called 'Old Metropolis' (or St Sophia) situated in the centre of the ancient city, comprising a church preceded by a square atrium enclosed by porticoes and flanked by single rooms to the south and north; it is a three-aisle basilica (25.5 × 20.2 m) with a tripartite narthex and a single-apse sanctuary. Its chronology varies between the second half of the 5th century and the second half of the 6th, while a phase of reconstruction belongs to the early 9th century (Rashenov 1932, 10; Bojadziev 1962, 321–346; Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 228–231). Another timber-roofed three-aisle basilica (32 × 20.5 m) overlay a temple of Zeus north of the main city gate. In light of the archaeological evidence, the church was damaged in the Avar attack of AD 587, but was restored as a cross-domed church, most likely in the third quarter of the 7th century. The church functioned until the beginning of the 9th century, when it was destroyed after the capture of *Mesembria* by khan Krum. The ruins were occupied by a cemetery in the 10th–11th centuries (Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 233; Kozhuharov 2003, 371–382).

Elsewhere, recent excavations in Sozopol have revealed a basilica immediately outside the fortress' south gate (Fig. 16.7). This was built in the 10th century over the ruins of a smaller, single-apse church from the 6th century and functioned until the 17th century (Drazheva 2012, 472–473; Drazheva and Nedev 2013, 468–470).

Discussion

When analysing the fortifications along the western coast of the Black Sea between the 8th and the late 10th century one must pay attention

to the strategy of defence of the coastal area and its hinterland as a whole, and to the fact that this strategy was not one and the same for the entire length of the coast and across the whole period (see Fig. 16.11). Thus, as considered above, from the late 7th century until the late 10th, the northern part of the coastal area lost its appearance as a militarised frontier zone which it held especially in the 5th–7th centuries. Instead, the geographical setting of the north-eastern border of the newly established Bulgarian Empire much further to the Dniester River turned this into a peripheral zone of the heartland of the State. The expansion of the settlement network in the 8th–10th centuries is one of the strongest indications for the stability and security of the lifestyle there (Kostova 2008a, 15–37). Of course, the Bulgarians were not a maritime nation and that must have been a core reason for them ignoring the deserted ancient seaports and fortresses. In addition, they may have chosen not to re-occupy or restore any of the former coastal strongholds in order to avoid the possibility of these falling back into Byzantine hands and providing potential shelters for Byzantine ships and campaign forces and thus launch-pads for attacks into the hinterland. Perhaps the sight of these deserted and ruined seaports might have made the Byzantine troops prefer to land directly at the Danube estuary (Kostova 2006, 579–597). As a result, the Bulgarians instead concentrated their efforts on defending the banks of the Danube by means of earthwork camps; on the shore of the Black Sea itself they set up a preventive or blocking system of earth dykes at the most vulnerable points. To some degree, the dykes along the coast and in its immediate hinterland seem to outline not a strongly militarised zone, but more a buffer zone – a type of 'no man's land' – that could hinder enemy movements. Indeed, the scarcity of settlements south of Varna, where the dykes were concentrated, demonstrates the rather hostile or insecure status of the area for farming and habitation between the 8th century and the first quarter of the 9th. The first stone fortresses built by the Bulgarians in the area belong to the 9th century. However, it is striking that these were situated in the coastal hinterland, *c.* 30 km to the west of the coast, and their function was that of guards to the roads linking the coast with the main centres of the state, namely *Pliska* and *Durostorum/ Dristra* (Kostova 2008a, 35–37) (Fig. 16.11).

As seen, for the southern coastal zone, to the south of cape Emine,

the system of defence established between the 5th and late 6th century was retained. In contrast with the north, this did not consist of fortified settlements, military fortresses and *castella*, but centred on ancient *poleis* fortified in the 5th century and reinforced in the 6th; these were all situated along the coast and survived the troubles of the Byzantine–Bulgarian contests of the 8th–10th centuries. Since Byzantine power had never been removed fully in that part of the coast – despite a few periods of Bulgarian domination – so the defensive strategy had never been altered. Hence, the fortifications of the coastal towns were maintained against land attacks by the Bulgarians. The ports of two of the towns, *Mesembria* and *Anchialos*, served as bases for landing of Byzantine troops in a number of campaigns in the 8th century. Overall, the Thracian hinterland of the coast was the theatre for some of the fiercest clashes between the two empires in the 8th–10th centuries. Crucial, therefore, was the Byzantine control of the key fortresses in the coastal hinterland for guarding the principal routes towards the coast and parallel to it (Fig. 16.11). To counter this, the Bulgarians sought to block the corridors to their own heartland through the relatively easy passes in eastern *Haemus*. Interesting in this regard is their revival of the late antique strategy of defence of the passes with wall barriers, in this case by means of earth dykes. However, to both south and north, the Bulgarian defensive strategy was not directed at the coast: in contrast, they defended the interior against the coast, which was, as seen, largely controlled by their Byzantine opponents.

Figure 16.10. Early Byzantine baths in Mesembria, general view (Source: http://historicalcities.narod.ru/Galeri/Nesebar_geleri.htm [accessed July 2008]).

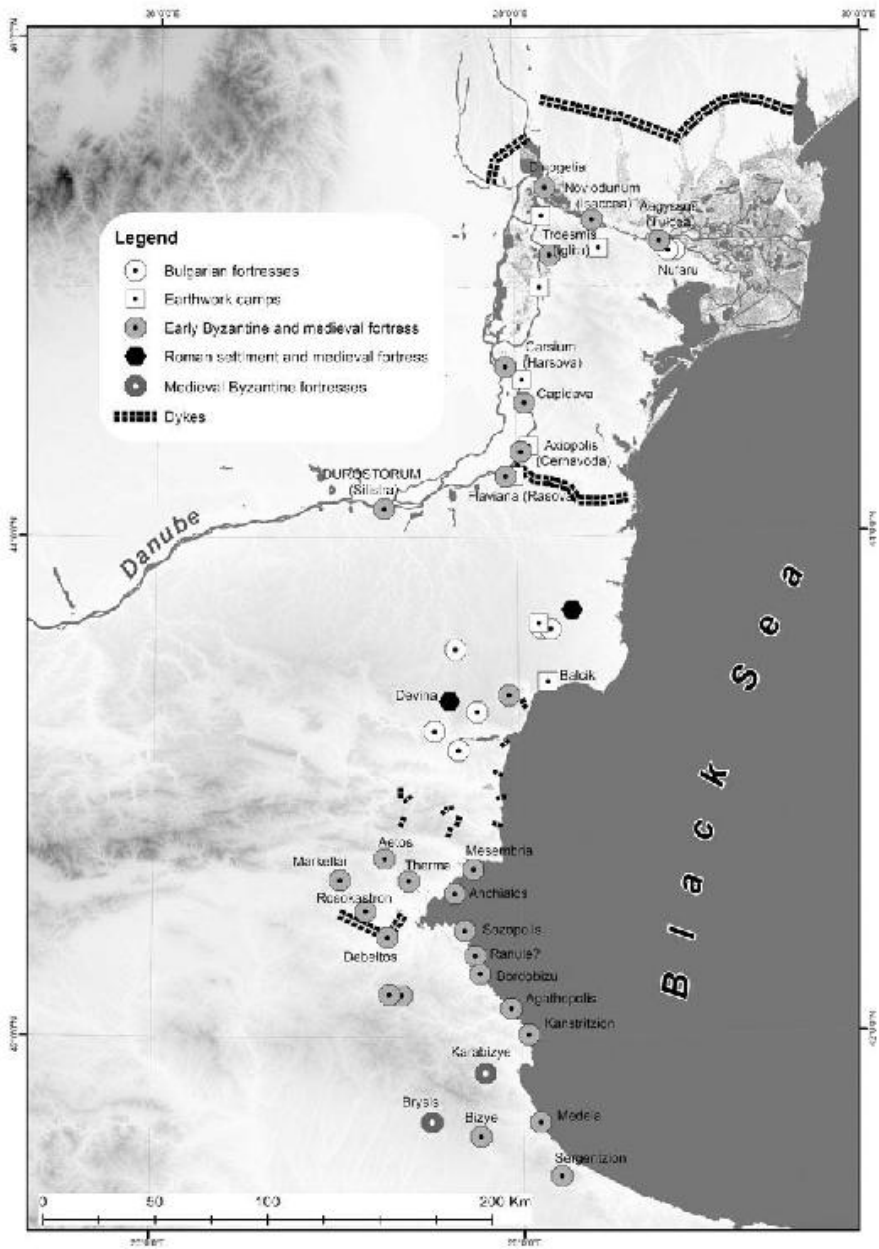

Figure 16.11. Topographic continuity in the fortification system along the western coast of the Black Sea, 8th–10th centuries AD (Drawing by author).

In conclusion, it has been recognized that between the 8th and 10th centuries AD the western Black Sea coast was indeed defended against threats but that those defences varied in nature from the north to the south. Thus, the northern part of the coast was defended mostly

by the Bulgarians against the naval power of the Byzantines, while the southern part was defended mostly by the Byzantines against the Bulgarian attacks coming by land. This difference was rooted both in the Roman legacy and in the actual strategies of the political powers dominating the coast. Gaps remain in our understanding, notably in terms of the articulation of Bulgarian defence along the dykes, the capacity of the various fortresses, their interior designs and buildings, and the permanency of garrisons within these; we await new excavations to build a fuller picture of this crucial theatre of late antique and early medieval defence in south-eastern Europe.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

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2 The only exceptions, written rather early and thus providing imprecise data in some cases, are two articles by K. Škorpil in 1930 and 1931. For a more recent overview on the Byzantine fortifications along the western coast of the Black Sea, see Kostova 2008b.

3 It is noticeable that these and other passes along the *Mesembria* – *Aetos* (mod. Aitos) – Sliven line had been defended in a similar manner by no less than 27 barrier walls in the 5th–7th centuries AD (see Rashev 1982, 11).

4 For instance, the fortress of Kamen brjag-Jaylata had three square towers (2.0 × 2.0 m) set 12–13 m apart, whereas the two rectangular towers (*c*. 4.0 × 5.0 m) at the fortress of Sv. Nikola lay 33 m apart (see Ovcharov 1982, 44).

5 Twelve churches dating between the 5th and 17th centuries survived in present-day Nesebăr (see Kostova 2008c and the cited literature).

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17

A Window on an Uncertain World: Butrint and the Fortified Sites of Epirus in the 7th–9th Centuries AD

William Bowden

Introduction: The Problem of the Early Middle Ages in the Balkans

Although in many other parts of Europe the so-called 'Dark Ages' have become increasingly illuminated in recent years, the early medieval history of much of the southern Balkans has remained opaque. Textual sources are limited and archaeological evidence remains hard to identify and chronologically imprecise. Dating of most of the sites and structures that have been placed in the 7th to early 9th centuries has traditionally relied on a combination of inference and wishful thinking in which signs of human activity are linked to events attested (sometimes obliquely) in documentary evidence. Alternatively, evidence of late Roman and later medieval activity on a given site is used to infer otherwise invisible occupation in the intervening period. In fact it is very rare that unequivocal archaeological evidence is found relating to this problematic period. This could imply several possible explanations:

1. there were in fact very few people living in the area
2. the people who were living here possessed very limited material culture and are thus archaeologically hard to see
3. archaeologists have been looking in the wrong places for these

people and sites
4. the methods employed by archaeologists have been inadequate for the detection of more ephemeral occupation.

Such issues are of course well-trodden ground for any archaeologist who has worked on the late Roman towns of the region that shrunk to vanishing point in the Early Middle Ages and I do not intend to revisit these in any detail. I would contend, however, that all these cited factors have played a role in the apparently intractable problem of *la grande brèche* in late antique Greece and some of its neighbours.

In this paper I will examine this problem in relation to the late Roman province of *Epirus Vetus* (which covers parts of present-day north-west Greece and southern Albania). Here, the debate around this period has primarily focused on two categories of site: churches and the fortified hilltops that sometimes had the added strategic advantage of (pre-)existing circuits of fortifications dating broadly to the Hellenistic period. Since I have discussed issues of dating churches to this period elsewhere (Bowden 2009), I will not cover this topic in detail again. Instead I shall examine the problem of the hilltop sites in relation to some key data from Butrint in southern Albania that has emerged in the last decade, before concluding with some thoughts on the types of social structures that may be represented by this archaeology. Although the remit of this volume is the 8th–10th centuries, by necessity much of my coverage pertains to the 7th century as this is the point at which the majority of our key dating evidence dwindles to invisibility. However, it can also be argued that a better understanding of the situation in the 7th century is essential if we are to hypothesise on the nature of settlement in the subsequent period.

Unreliable Narratives: Textual Evidence and Historiographies of Epirus

Our fragmentary textual evidence paints a bleak picture of life in 7th-century Epirus, which the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire was seemingly unable to defend from attack by groups which are often, although not exclusively, defined as Sclavenes. In AD 586/7, according to the much debated Chronicle of Monemvasia and Arethas of Caesarea (writing in the 10th century), these attacks caused the

native population to flee to the Ionian islands and southern Italy (Charanis 1950, 148; Dujčev 1976, 86–88; Chrysos 1981, 71). This forced migration and subsequent refugee status of sections of the population seems to be a feature of the period. For example, in AD 591, Pope Gregory the Great urged the bishops of Illyricum to provide refuge for their peers who had been driven out of their sees until such time as they could return (*Epistles* I, 43; Chrysos 1981, 72).

By 604 the only bishop remaining on the mainland of *Epirus Vetus* was that of the provincial capital Nikopolis. Four other bishops were guests of a fifth, Bishop Alkison of Kerkyra. Alkison's guests were soon causing trouble, carving out independent sees for themselves on Kerkyra, forcing Pope Gregory to intercede on behalf of Alkison (*Epistles* XIV, 7; XIV, 13; see Chrysos 1981, 74). Further Slavic attacks of 614–616 were recorded in the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, which suggested that 'wherever they wrought their havoc, they left more of the cities and the countryside uninhabitable' (Lemerle 1979–1981, 175; Chrysos 1981, 78; Soustal and Koder 1981, 51).

Although considering some of the more strident testimonies of our own times in relation to migration might cause us to question the veracity of our limited sources for the 7th century, those sources do paint a fairly consistent picture of instability and forced migration on the part of the existing population. The evidence of place-names could also suggest significant inward migration into the Epirus in this period: of around 450 toponyms in Epirus and the Ionian islands, some 180 (mainly inland) are of Slavic origin, although the link between place-names and the ethnicity of a region's inhabitants is notoriously problematic and a number may well be of later origin (Osswald 2007). It is also often argued that the region of *Vagenetia/ Bagenetia* (whose name survives into the Turkish period) on the coast of Epirus reflected the area controlled by the Baiunetai, a Slav tribe whose presence in Epirus is attested in the Miracles of St Demetrius (Soustal and Koder 1981, 119–120).

The Slav presence in Epirus remains hotly contested in nationalist rhetoric in both Greece and Albania, with the relative paucity of clear evidence allowing the protagonists in such debates to make any argument that suits their purpose (Curta 2011, 1–8). At its heart this debate rests on a simplistic view of ethnic identity predicated on a binary division of the population into 'Greek' or 'Slav', reflecting a

'primordial' view of ethnicity, in which ethnic identity as fixed and immutable, based on factors such as genetic or geographical origins or allegiances and language (see Jones 1997, 65). This approach to ethnicity is now widely regarded as unsatisfactory, with many scholars preferring to view ethnic identity as a highly flexible situational construct. This has had little effect, however, on the debate surrounding early medieval Greece or Albania, which sees an incoming Slav population of uncertain size existing as 'islands in a solid population of Greeks' (Vokotopoulou 1992, 4) before being ultimately 'assimilated' into the Greek population (*e.g.* Osswald 2007, 129, 144).

The idea of 'assimilation' (and the related 'Christianisation') is obviously problematic, in that 'assimilation' denies active agency on the part of the incomers who are rendered passive recipients of a dominant Greek language and culture. In this it resembles the concept of 'Romanisation', which has been largely discredited as a model in recent years due to its simple binary opposition between the categories of 'Roman' and 'native' and the way in which it is unidirectional, with influence running only from colonisers to the colonised (see Mattingly 2002 and 2006, 15–16, 545 for references to the major literature). However, the Byzantine administrative structure that was re-established in Epirus in the 9th century was very different to that of the late Roman Empire, based as it was around the settlement pattern that evolved in the intervening period, and should be seen as emerging from the circumstances of the 7th and 8th centuries discussed below. Any inwardly migrating population in the 7th century should be regarded as a key factor in these circumstances, rather than as an element that simply melted away in the face of a culturally dominant Greek society.

The paucity of textual evidence for the later 7th, 8th and early 9th centuries in Epirus is in part due to the fact that the area had in practice a very tenuous connection with the Byzantine administration across this period. This is also reflected in the almost complete absence of coins later than the first decades of the reign of Heraclius, a lacuna that lasted until the early 9th century (see Veikou 2012a, 251–255), suggesting that Epirus had fallen from the orbit of monetary circulation (and hence the Byzantine military) – a point discussed further below. This contrasts with the situation in Corinth

and Athens (and, to a lesser extent, sites in the Peloponnese) where numismatic evidence attests to continued, if episodic, coin supply and arguably therefore a Byzantine military presence (Curta 2011, 111–113). Other evidence consists of the presence of Epirote sees in lists of bishops dating to the 8th century (Soustal and Koder 1981, 83) and seals relating to John, Archbishop of Nikopolis, dating to the 7th or 8th century (Chrysos 1997, 186–188), although to what extent this relates to activity at the sites themselves is unclear. Indeed, in the 10th century, the seat of both the *strategos* and the metropolitan of Nikopolis was at Naupaktos to the south, while the seal evidence of the 8th and 9th centuries indicates that the focus of Byzantine power in the region was the island of Kephallenia (Soustal and Koder 1981, 83–84; Veikou 2012a, 242–248).

Figure 17.1. Map of the late antique hilltops and islands of Epirus Vetus (Image by author).

The Hilltop Sites and Islands

It appears that a fundamental reorganisation of settlement took place in Epirus in the 7th century and possibly earlier, involving a shift towards more defensive sites on hilltops and islands (Bowden 2003a,

173–190; Veikou 2012a, 282–290; Veikou 2012b). This reflects a wider adoption of this type of site in the southern Balkans (see Hood 1970; Gregory 1981; 1982; 1992; Dunn 1994; 2004; Bintliff 2012; Veikou 2012b). Much of the discussion of these sites has interpreted them in the context of the refortification of Epirus under the emperor Justinian (527–565), described by Procopius in Book IV of *The Buildings*; indeed, several of the sites can be plausibly identified with those described by Procopius. However, the extent to which the hilltop sites were part of a coherent defensive strategy under Justinian is highly debateable and it can be argued that *The Buildings* reflects an existing situation that Procopius attempted to co-opt into a narrative of imperial achievement demanded by the panegyric form (Bowden 2003a, 173–180; 2006). Nonetheless, whatever the reason behind it, there seems little doubt that these sites marked a significant change in the settlement patterns of Epirus.

The roles fulfilled by these sites in Epirus remain unclear, not least because the archaeological evidence is so poor. As with other examples of such sites in Greece, they often produce late antique ceramics and coins, evidence of churches, and construction of new fortifications or repair of pre-existing Hellenistic wall circuits. None have produced any dateable evidence relating to the second half of the 7th century or the 8th century, although some have yielded coins and other evidence relating to the 9th century or later. Some 33 probable hilltop and island sites can be identified within Epirus Vetus (Fig. 17.1 and Table 17.1), while most of the region's Roman towns show occupation into the 6th and, possibly, 7th centuries. Butrint and Nikopolis have clear evidence of 7th-century occupation and such can also be suggested for Phoenike and Onchesmos (Bowden 2000 and 2003). Other lowland sites with churches have been suggested to demonstrate 7th- to 9th-century phases, but the evidence remains very limited (Bowden 2009).

The hilltop sites and islands summarised in Table 17.1 demonstrate a wide variety of characteristics and there is no reason to view them as all sharing the same function. However, certain common features are worth considering. Noticeably, 16 of the 33 sites had been fortified in the pre-Roman period and often possessed substantial circuits in isodomic or polygonal masonry which were likely repaired or altered in Late Antiquity. Actual close dating of the rebuilding of

these circuits has never been demonstrated archaeologically, however, and the evidence for late antique occupation is often very fragmentary or conjectural.

Nonetheless, a number of these sites were clearly used in the 6th century or later. Some of the best evidence comes from Kastritsa on the southern side of the lake of Ioannina (Fig. 17.2), where Hammond recorded the wall circuit as measuring around 2,625 m long and including numerous later reconstructions (1967, 67–69). Excavations within the site uncovered two buildings of Classical or Hellenistic date that had been re-occupied in Late Antiquity, with the exterior polygonal walls reconstructed using *spolia* and limestone rubble and internal partitions created using limestone rubble. One of these buildings contained two coin hoards of 86 and 237 coins respectively, composed of a range of bronze coinage of which the earliest was of Constantius Gallus (351–354) and the latest was a *follis* of Maurice dating to 582/3 (Douzougli 1994). Kastritsa has been suggested as a possible location for *Euroea*, described in some detail by Procopius (*Buildings* IV. i. 39–42). A further good example is that of Rizovouni (ancient *Vatiae*), where the rebuilt walls include brick levelling courses typical of late Roman fortifications laid directly onto the isodomic masonry of the earlier circuit (Fig. 17.3). The fort's interior features the remains of a probable late antique church, although no archaeological material has been recorded from the site (Bowden 2000; 2003, 180–185). The present name of the locality (Lelova) is of Slavic origin (Soustal and Koder 1981, 193).

This reuse of earlier sites can be interpreted in different ways, none of which are mutually exclusive. Pre-existing fortifications presumably were attractive in that they provided an easily defended location at short notice. The circuits are usually large enough to contain people and their flocks or herds but the combination of natural terrain and artificial fortifications would make it possible for a relatively small number of people to defend them. In fact it appears that in some cases only part of the earlier defended area was enclosed, as at Kastri and Çuka e Ajtojt (Bowden 2003a, 180). The presence of earlier fortifications meant that new construction efforts could be confined to repairs, rebuilding and reinforcement of damaged/eroded or vulnerable areas. This perhaps has implications for our understanding of the human and financial resources available for such

a project, although even in the case of limited repairs the investment should not be underestimated.

Re-establishing a presence on earlier sites may also have had a symbolic value. The use of pre-Roman and Roman monuments in the early medieval period is widely attested, indicating their importance as part of a symbolic vocabulary in which connections with the physical remains of a perhaps mythical past were used to articulate power and ownership in the present (Effros 2001). This behaviour has notable resonance in times of insecurity, when affirmations of a community's past become particularly important (Furedi 1992).

Whether these sites were refuges or permanent settlements in the 7th century and later is difficult to say in light of the paucity of excavated evidence, although there is no reason to suppose a single explanation across the different sites. Certainly some of the cities of Epirus remain occupied into the 7th century, albeit at a reduced scale. Few lowland rural sites have seen sufficient excavation to argue for persistence beyond the 6th century. Post-7th-century occupation has been suggested at structures that seem to post-date the church of H. Sophia (Mytikas), although the only dating evidence comprises two coins of the late 10th–11th centuries (Bowden 2000, 60–62; Veikou 2012a, 434–435). Some churches feature burials that post-date the abandonment of the building but dating evidence is absent.

The most fully excavated of these late antique sites is the tiny island of Kephalos in the Ambracian Gulf. Although covering barely 10 acres, the island shows intensive occupation in the 6th and early 7th century, including two basilicas (one with a baptistery) and several other structures of uncertain date (Barla 1965; 1966; 1967; 1968; 1970; Bowden 2000, 43–47; 2003, 186–189). Finds notably include 27 coins from the reign of Heraclius, with the latest identifiable example dating to 617/8. Ceramics include late ARS (an example of Hayes 91D was published by Barla) together with less closely datable sherds of LR1 and LR2 amphorae (Veikou 2012a, figs 183–184); numerous loom weights were also recovered. The mosaic from Basilica B bears a striking resemblance to the pavement of Basilica A at Nikopolis while a number of brick stamps from Kephalos Basilica A are also paralleled at Nikopolis (Sodini 1970, 723–724), suggesting that Kephalos was linked to the ecclesiastical and civil administration of the provincial capital.

Table 17.1. Summary of evidence from hilltop sites and islands in Epirus.

Site name	*Type of site*	*Evidence for 6th–7th century*	*Evidence for later activity*	*Fortifications*
H. Athanas.	Promontory	Pottery	Later church	
Angelokastro	Coastal hill	Sculpture	Medieval castle (13th C. & later)	
Antigoneia	Promontory	5th–6th C. church		Hellenistic fortifications with later addition
Ashioon	Promontory	Settlement, graves & church	Graves and houses	Hellenistic fortification
Bregu i Muzeut	Hilltop	Sculpture & ceramics. Possibly Justinianopolis described by Prokopios	Later village adjacent	Hellenistic with later additions
Chimara	Promontory	Mentioned by Prokopios	Discussed in sources from 11th C. onwards	Hellenistic
Cuka e Ajrojt	Hilltop	Ceramics		Hellenistic with probable late antique phase
H. Dionisios	Hilltop	Fortification (described by Prokopios)	Site mentioned in sources from 10th C. onwards	Limestone rubble above possible Hellenistic basecourse
H. Elias	Coastal ridge/island	Ceramics	Post-medieval church	Polygonal masonry, with possible later additions
Kastro	Island	Traces of early church		
Kishti	Hilltop	Some Roman finds	Some later ceramics	Polygonal masonry with indicated later additions
Kastrat.	Promontory	Buildings, cemetery & late 6th C. coin hoard		Hellenistic with probable late antique additions
Kepi i Lalit	Island	Extensive ecclesiastical pottery, two basilicas & 7th C. coins	13th C. coins	
Konitsa	Promontory	Possible 6th C. or later fort recorded by Hammond		
Lachanokastron	Hilltop/ridge	Fortifications of uncertain date with nearby basilica	Mentioned in 16th C. texts	Late antique or (probable) medieval fortifications
Lagoudia	Island	Structural remains & 6th C. pottery		
Leah	Promontory	Late antique pottery, structural remains (church?) with mosaic	Byzantine & Venetian coins	Polygonal wall circuit, with late antique or medieval extension
Likovouno	Hilltop	Site of so-called Nekyomanteion. Late Roman pottery recorded	Medieval–post-medieval monastery	Fortified Hellenistic farmstead?
Volquot	Hilltop	Late antique(?) pottery		Hellenistic circuit wall, some later additions
Vouraptsi	Promontory	Fortification	Mentioned in 15th C. sources	Mortared limestone rubble wall circuit
Ozeri (Passos)	Island	Two churches of uncertain date	Churches?	
Palaeokastro	Roman fort	Late antique churches & ceramics		4th C. cohort fortress
Panaghia	Island	Possible late antique church		
Parga	Coastal promontory	Possible late antique church	Venetian castle	
Perati	Promontory	Fortification & late antique ceramics		Mortared limestone circuit with rectangular towers
Petroni	Promontory	Remains & late antique ceramics		Walls are reported but no longer visible
Polistafila	Promontory	Possible late antique church	Medieval & post-medieval village	
Qeparo	Hillock	Buildings, fortifications & ceramics (?)	Late Byzantine (?) pottery	Hellenistic circuit with possible later additions
Rrasovica	Hilltop	Fortifications & late antique church	Later medieval (?) pottery & post-medieval church	Hellenistic wall circuit with late antique rebuilding
Sarandë	Ridge	Burial cisterns (?) & nearby late antique church	Burial cisterns of unknown date & cistern	Hellenistic wall with extensive late antique or medieval rebuilding
H. Stephanos	Island	Late antique church	Possible medieval church	
Xarokghos	Ridge	Late antique pottery		
Zhiviree	Hillock	Possible fortification & nearby late antique settlement		Hellenistic wall with possible later additions

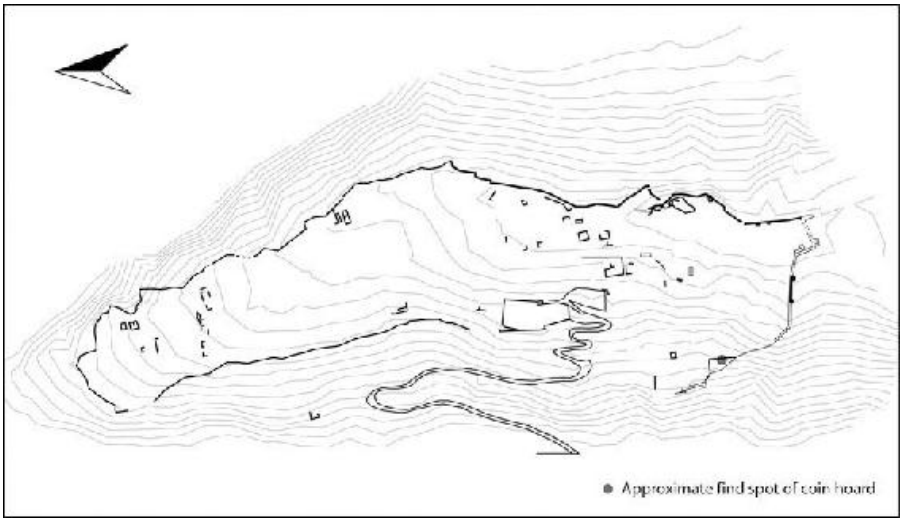

Figure 17.2. Kastritsa (After Douzougli 1994, fig no 1).

Kephalos is intriguing in that it contains the vast majority of the published 7th-century coins from the province, although an unlisted sequence of coins apparently lasting into the 8th century was recorded by Vokotopoulos (1974) from his otherwise unpublished excavations of a series of 'huts' built against the interior of the late antique walls at Nikopolis. Even allowing for the limited and poor quality excavation elsewhere in the province this is a striking figure. Butrint, for example, which has seen very large-scale excavation, has only produced single coins of Phocas, Heraclius and Constans II and a further 7th-century follis, possibly of Heraclius or Constans II (Cesano 1932, 74; Bowden 2011, 317; Kamani 2013, 252). The obvious conclusion from this is that Kephalos (and by extension Nikopolis) remained within the Byzantine monetary economy of the early 7th century while Butrint and the rest of the province had fallen out of it. This could suggest a military presence at Nikopolis and Kephalos (Curta 2011, 97) and further underlines the exceptional nature of the site.

Figure 17.3. Late antique masonry at Rizovouni (Image by author).

The absence of coins at other hilltop sites and islands also argues against a wider military presence at these, given the strong link between coin distribution and military activity attested by evidence in Achaea and the Peloponnese (Curta 2011, 85–89). If so, we might read (*contra* Procopius) these defended sites as localised initiatives rather than central imperial policy, although there is no reason to suppose that site functions or control would remain constant between the mid-6th and early 7th centuries.

A further five islands off the Epirote coast contain evidence of late antique occupation (Table 17.1), mainly based on the presence of possible churches. Those at Ozia on the island of Paxos are suggested to date to the 7th or 8th centuries, although this chronology is based heavily on limited stylistic analogy (Pallas 1977, 147–149; Bowden 2000, 89); accordingly, as with other churches in the region assigned to this period, a later date is equally possible (Bowden 2009). Paxos, as a waterless island, has little to recommend it beyond its defensive properties and remoteness, although its inhospitable nature may also have been attractive to Christian ascetics.

For the remainder of the 7th century and through the 8th century, evidence from the hilltop sites and islands is largely absent, the major exception being the remote site of Aphiona on the north-west coast of

Corfu (Bulle 1934; Bowden 2003a, 203–209; Curta 2011, 121–123). Here a precipitous coastal promontory extended out into the Ionian Sea; a narrow isthmus at the far end led to a further promontory protected by a series of pre-Roman fortifications. On the main area of the site a settlement was identified occupying an area of about 200 × 100 m, which the excavators suggested was largely occupied by buildings separated by narrow passages and streets. Four of these houses were identified, varying from 5.5–7.7 m in length and 3.5–5.5 m in width, with at least one house divided into two rooms. Tufa quern stones, which Curta (2011, 121) notes are also present at Isthmia, suggest trading connections with Italy; the pottery from the settlement is only recorded as 'Byzantine'. In addition, a series of over 50 graves were noted, of which 19 were recorded in detail with nine containing grave goods paralleled in 7th- to 8th-century contexts elsewhere (notably the so-called Komani cemeteries in central Albania) (Bowden 2003b; 2015 with references). Grave goods include glass vessels, earrings, necklaces of glass beads, rings, pendants, large fibulae and buckles including a 'Corinth-type' buckle. Ceramics included small one-handled jugs that Curta (2011, 121) proposes are paralleled in a 7th-century cemetery at the church of St Dionysius the Areopagite in Athens. Both male and female skeletons (including children) are interred in the graves, which, like the Komani cemeteries, often contain multiple burials. Two possible churches were noted, one in association with a furnished burial.

The nature of the community at Aphiona is open to question. Curta (2011, 123) suggested that Aphiona, the Komani cemeteries and related sites elsewhere in Greece represent the presence of land troops stationed more or less permanently with their families; he points to similar interpretations of related cemeteries in Sicily and Sardinia and in Bulgaria, close to the current Bulgarian-Greek border. Certainly the cemetery assemblages in Corfu and Albania attest to supra-regional connections, although there are also significant differences between them, notably at Aphiona the presence of glass vessels (absent from the Albanian cemeteries) and the lack of the millefiori beads and crescent-shaped earrings that are common at Koman and Kruja. Weapons are also not present at Aphiona, whereas swords and spears are known from Koman and Kruja (although remain exceptional) and the most common (but not ubiquitous) weapons at the Albanian

cemeteries are axes, daggers and arrowheads. There is certainly not a secure martial identity represented in the grave assemblages (Bowden 2015).

Perhaps the strongest argument against a military presence at Aphiona is the site's location, which has no obvious strategic value. The remote promontory location in the far north west of Corfu is more easily interpreted as that of a community conscious of their own security rather than as one performing a military role such as monitoring maritime traffic on the Corfu Strait. There are also indications of other occupation on the inhospitable western coast of Corfu, with further contemporary graves noted at Palaiokastritsa slightly to the south of Aphiona (Agallopoulou 1973). Potentially other cemeteries and settlement remain to be discovered on the more sheltered eastern side of Corfu, adjacent to the Corfu Strait, although given this area's intensive development for tourism in recent decades it seems likely that some trace of early medieval occupation would have come to light if such was widespread here.

Butrint

We can turn now to Butrint, which is the only site in the province that has provided stratified evidence dating to the 8th and early 9th centuries (Fig. 17.4). These data have been published in detail elsewhere (Bowden and Hodges 2012; Greenslade 2013; Kamani 2013) and a summary will suffice here. When we started working at Butrint in 1994, one of the main aims of the project was to find out what happened to a port in the central Mediterranean in the late and post-Roman period. As noted above, the late antique urban centres of *Epirus Vetus* dwindle to vanishing point by the mid-7th century. Evidence for later activity at the former provincial capital of Nikopolis is very limited (summarised by Veikou 2012a, 482–484) but Butrint by the 10th century was re-emerging as a major centre (Hodges 2011; Bowden and Hodges 2012). However, despite extensive excavations, the period from the 7th until the 9th century proved elusive. Investigation of two large late antique monuments – the Triconch Palace and the Baptistery – as well as other, smaller interventions within and outside the city failed to locate any deposits dating to this period. When we published the first phase of the excavations in 2003, we suggested that occupation within the town was drastically

curtailed in the 7th century and thus postulated the existence of a *kastron* on the acropolis (Hodges 2003). Subsequent investigation of this putative early medieval centre failed, however, to locate conclusive evidence of occupation in this period (Greenslade *et al*. 2013, 62).

Although a *kastron* on the acropolis now appears unlikely, excavation of two towers on the late Roman fortifications on the western side of the town have revealed occupation sequences that include a major episode of destruction dating to *c*. AD 800 (Bowden and Hodges 2012; Kamani 2013). The two towers were part of the late antique defences, another section of which has been dated to the first quarter of the 6th century (Bowden *et al*. 2011, 175–184). The western section of the defences was the most substantial as it defended the landward approach to Butrint. Finds immediately above the towers' construction levels date from the late 5th to the mid-6th century, suggesting that their construction was broadly contemporary with the dated phases elsewhere. There is no clear indication that occupation continued uninterrupted into the Middle Ages, although C14 dates on carbonised timbers indicate that some of the timbers of the towers were replaced between the mid-6th and mid-7th centuries, indicating maintenance works.

By the late 8th century these towers were reoccupied, seemingly as dwellings that retained the original late antique configuration of the towers. These dwellings were both subsequently destroyed in a catastrophic fire and their burnt contents revealed an extraordinary assemblage of objects, including several thousand fragments of glass, comprising around 100 glass vessels as well as window glass, waste glass and raw glass, intended for recycling and dating to the late 5th–8th centuries. The most common vessels (and the most complete ones) are stemmed wine glasses dating to the 8th century. Chemical analysis provided parallels with 8th- and 9th-century glass production in the Middle East. Other smaller fragments of vessel and window glass are typical of 6th-century assemblages at Butrint and clearly show the value of cullet as a commodity. It is thought that the glass was being reworked locally (Jennings 2010; Jennings and Stark 2013). The ceramics included globular amphorae from various parts of the Mediterranean (the Crimea, Crete or southern Italy), chafing dishes, and unglazed white ware from Constantinople. In Tower 2, the

amphorae were housed on the ground floor, while a different selection of pottery occurred on the first floor including a number of unusual three-spouted jugs (Vroom 2012).

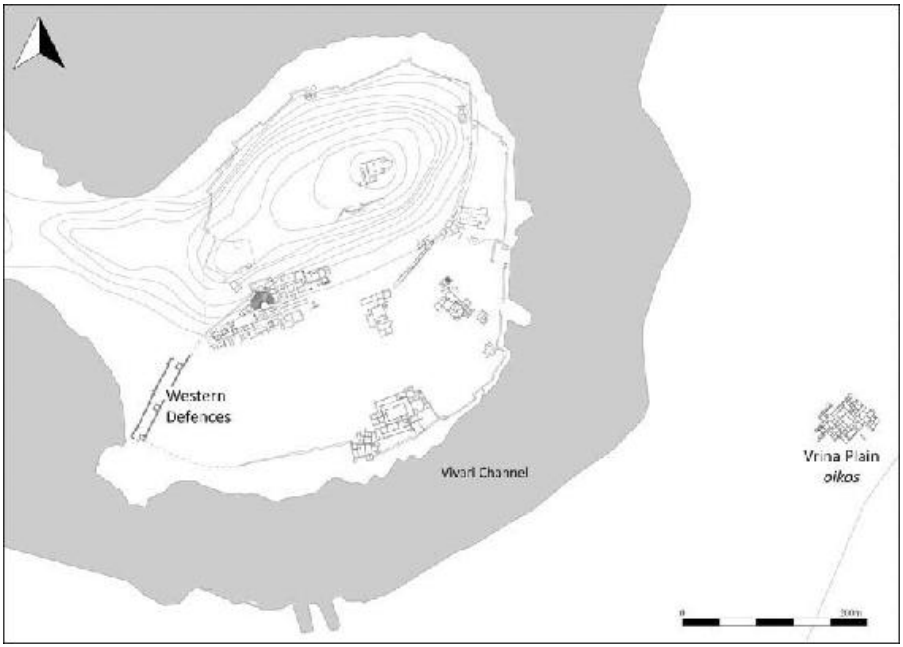

Figure 17.4. Locations of 7th- to 9th-century occupation at Butrint, at the Western Defences and on the Vrina Plain (Image by Butrint Foundation).

The discoveries on the Western Defences tell us some interesting things about 8th-century Butrint and by extension about Epirus as a whole. First, they suggest that the *kastron* (if we can refer to it as such) was located in the Western Defences rather than on the acropolis, fitting in with our previous model in concept if not in location. It also tells us that material from this elusive period does indeed exist but is present in much smaller quantities than that of earlier periods. However, if this type of material had been present in the other major excavations at Butrint (and at other excavated sites in the region), it would surely have been found.

The next identifiable phase at Butrint was on the Vrina Plain, an extramural area that had previous hosted a number of major Roman town houses, one of which was converted into a Christian basilica in the late 5th or early 6th century, with a large apsidal audience hall functioning as the narthex (Bowden and Hodges 2012; Greenslade 2013). The church was seemingly abandoned from the mid-6th

century but the site saw renewed use in the mid-9th century. The basilica structure underwent some repairs and alterations including the blocking of the nave arcades and construction of a new altar. Post-holes were also cut through the flagstones of the audience hall/narthex after fires had been set to crack the slabs and it is clear that much of this complex had two stories. Other additions included a pottery kiln built in a room off the eastern aisle.

The site produced 49 Byzantine coins covering AD 820–950, the majority of which were *folles* of Leo VI (866–912); they were generally in good condition suggesting limited circulation. The ceramic assemblage was 50% composed of wine amphorae from Otranto, with the remainder made up of local kitchen wares, with minimal finewares present. A number of graves were found: their C14 dates show that they were contemporary with this late occupation; one burial also contained a *follis* of Leo VI. Most strikingly, the site produced five lead seals, associated with Byzantine officials, including John, *strategos* of Sicily, Constantine, *strategos* of Dyrrachium, an unidentified *strategos*, a certain Kallonas connected to the imperial administration and Constantine, a eunuch courtier from Constantinople in charge of imperial banquets (Papadopoulou 2012a).

The assemblage as a whole suggests that the Vrina Plain residence was that of an archon, a regional administrator, possibly Theodore who is mentioned as archon of *Vagenetia* on an 8th- to 9th-century seal from Bulgaria (Vagenetia being the medieval name for this part of Epirus). It is intriguing, however, that this regional administrator chose not to locate himself within the relative security of the walled town of Butrint but in an undefended site on the Vrina Plain – surely a clear statement of power and perhaps an illustration of the changing circumstances by the mid-9th century. This site was seemingly abandoned *c*. AD 950, when large-scale activity seems to return to the walled town (Hodges 2011).

Conclusion: Power and Society in Epirus in the 7th–10th Centuries

The evidence from the hilltop sites and islands, such as it is, speaks of a fractured and insecure society from the late 6th century AD. Since none of these sites were obviously occupied during the Roman period,

they clearly represent a major shift in priorities (even if they were only sporadically utilised in Late Antiquity). The retreat to the type of site occupied in the Classical and Hellenistic periods emphasises a renewed need for defensive nucleated settlement. This type of fortified settlement previously came to prominence in Epirus in the 4th century BC, when the loose tribal confederacies of the region coalesced into more defined (although still highly fluid) political structures, not least in the face of threats from their more organised Illyrian and Macedonian neighbours. Around 360–355 BC, ten states or cities are listed in an inscription recording the visit of a mission by the *theoroi* of Epidauros. These states, including the Thesprotoi, the Molossoi and Chaonia, were very much derived from the earlier tribal groupings. Through the course of the 3rd century BC, the names of many of these entities disappear from epigraphic evidence, indicating significant change in local political structures and the expansion of certain polities at the expense of others as power in Epirus became increasingly more centralised, notably under Pyrrhus (Cabanes 1976). The fortified sites (which required the ability to marshal significant resources and manpower) developed in this rapidly developing political context.

While it would be facile to draw overly literal comparisons between the pre- and post-Roman periods, arguably both are characterised by fluid and rapidly changing local and regional power structures and the constant threat of incursion from neighbouring areas, both local and more distant. The movements of armed groups of varying sizes would have contributed to an insecurity that increased the population's reliance on fortified citadels that were less accessible from agricultural land and the well-watered pastures of the valleys that saw most occupation during the Roman period. Equally, the symbolic significance of these sites for the early medieval population should not be underestimated. They would have represented the antiquity of habitation in the region and would thus have resonance for groups keen to affirm territorial rights and primacy over incoming migrants.

The archaeology of Butrint and the hilltop sites confirms that from the mid-7th century we are looking at a society that held very limited contact with wider Mediterranean networks. In the late Roman period, these networks were based around a combination of private trade and

state-supported supply systems linked to the *annona*, although the precise mechanisms through which they functioned remain opaque (Reynolds 2003). Only Butrint and Aphiona have produced clear evidence of maritime connections in this period and the concentration of finds around these small nuclei indicates that access to such trade was poor. Imported material that arrived at these two locations was not apparently widely circulated outside them. Although the limited nature of the archaeological evidence may exaggerate this lack of connectivity it seems unlikely that future discoveries will significantly alter the picture of a region in which production and exchange was very localised.

The withdrawal of Epirus from Mediterranean networks is also illustrated by the clear absence of a coin-based economic system (an absence noted in much of Greece for this period). At Butrint no coins were recovered in the 8th-century destruction levels in the western defences, although the 7th-century *follis* was found in some re-deposited material in Tower 2. When coinage does return in the 9th century, its circulation is extremely limited, and only from the late 9th century does circulation begin to expand. Although the earliest coin from the Vrina Plain dates to the reign of Michael II (820–829), in the walled town of Butrint the earliest is of Basil I (867–886). The provenance of the 9th- and early 10th-century coins from Butrint is exclusively Sicilian (although perhaps arriving via southern Italy) (Papadopoulou 2012b, 312–313). This picture of strong connections with southern Italy is reinforced by the dominance of Otranto amphorae in the Vrina Plain assemblage. Butrint's connections with Sicily and Calabria are also demonstrated in the Life of St Elias the Younger, relating how St Elias was arrested at Butrint when en route from Sparta to Sicily, while in AD 904, following his death in Thessalonica, his relics were returned to Calabria via Butrint (Rossi Taibbi 1962, XIII, 42, 153–154, c. 28). The combination of numismatic and textual sources and the evidence of the seals indicate that in the late 9th and early 10th centuries, Butrint occupied a significant position on the route from Sicily and Calabria to the east.

Elsewhere in Epirus, in common with much of Greece and the Adriatic, coin circulation remains very limited in the 9th century. Veikou's list of coins recovered from the area of Epirus surveyed in her 2012 volume includes only two 9th-century *folles* from Naupaktos

(outside *Epirus Vetus*) (Veikou 2012a, 252, 256), while Papadopoulou's survey (2012b) of coins from Albania demonstrates that, apart from Butrint, really only Dyrrhachium, at the western end of the *Via Egnatia*, was in receipt of coins during the 9th century. At Dyrrhachium, like Butrint, coins of Leo VI form a dominant part of the assemblage, indicating that both these coastal towns were participating in a political and economic system from which other settlements were excluded.

The restricted orbit of Byzantine power in the 9th century is also suggested by the concentration of evidence to the south of Epirus on the northern coast of the Gulf of Patras, particularly the island of Kephallenia, whose officials are recorded on numerous seals from the 8th and 9th centuries (Veikou 2012a, 242–248). In the 10th century, power was focused on Naupaktos, which was the seat of the *strategos* and metropolitan of Nikopolis, whose attachment to Nikopolis itself seems to have been purely nominal. Evidence from excavations of the basilica at Kato Vasiliki, close to the Gulf of Patras, includes graves possibly dating to the 7th–9th centuries, with grave goods including a Corinth-type buckle in iron (Veikou 2012a, 234–236). This would suggest that the northern coastal strip between Kephallenia and Naupaktos, like Butrint, participated in the restricted maritime networks of the Early Middle Ages.

In contrast, the archaeological evidence for occupation of the hilltop sites and islands (and indeed lowland sites in Epirus) in the 8th and 9th centuries is non-existent, with the exception of that from Aphiona. This could point to both a demographic collapse linked to the forced migration suggested by textual sources and an impoverished material culture or a combination of the two factors. It could also be argued that occupation of the hilltops and islands was a short-lived phenomenon of the 6th to early 7th centuries and that people, perhaps an immigrant population, were living elsewhere, perhaps at sites that would not be revealed by the archaeological strategies adopted in the region to date. Archaeological investigation of Epirus has traditionally focused on *known* sites, usually identified through the presence of standing remains from classical antiquity, and if the early medieval settlement pattern differed from that of antiquity, the chances of finding archaeological evidence for it would be considerably reduced. Certainly the distribution of Slav place-

names and the Slavic vocabulary that remains within the Albanian language are consistent with the occupation of lowland areas suitable for arable farming and stock-rearing. Archaeological evidence from the area of the so-called 'Prague civilization' further reinforces the suggestion that an incoming Slav population favoured lowland areas and valley floors (Bowden 2003a, 212–214).

In conclusion, I would suggest that the evidence from Epirus supports the idea of a fragmented and fluid society in the 7th–10th centuries with power focused around small groups and individuals. Some of these individuals, sometimes with official recognition from the restricted Byzantine State, were in control of relationships with the outside world and controlled access to imported material culture, in ways not dissimilar to those postulated elsewhere in early medieval Europe. However, in order to understand this further we need archaeologists and archaeological methodologies that will specifically address the key questions that remain about life in the insecure world of 8th- to 10th-century Epirus.

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18

Fortified Settlements in Carolingian Istria

Miljenko Jurković

Introduction

An exceptional document, the 'Plaid at Rižana' ('Placito de Risana' or 'Plea of Rižana') – comprising the proceedings of an assembly held in AD 804 somewhere on the banks of the Rižana River in north-west Istria at the head of the Adriatic Sea (Brown 1984: 201; Krahwinkler 2004; Levak 2007) – gives a first insight to the political and territorial organisation of Carolingian rule in the furthest, south-eastern part of the Empire. The Frankish official, Duke John, had summoned, among others, 172 representatives of Istrian towns and other settlements (labelled as *castella* in the document). Although the 'Plea' does not provide a comprehensive list of those Istrian settlements, the very number of representatives indicates that they were not few. Furthermore, most of the sites were not newly founded, but form witnesses of a long-lasting continuity of spatial organisation of the peninsula, with distant, Bronze/Iron Age or more recent, late antique origins.

Unfortunately, due to research traditions in Croatia, landscape archaeology remains under-utilised and little engaged as a discipline resource. In addition, it is perhaps understandable that research of early medieval fortified settlements has not been a primary target in a country where many of those settlement types remain strongly active – for example, more than 30 centres overlie former Roman towns, many of which retain their Roman shape, and there are hundreds of churches of late antique and early medieval foundation, many still

intact. Thus, currently, only a preliminary sketch can be given here of the landscape settlement of Istria across the 8th to 10th centuries AD. Below we introduce the level of relevant archaeology available before outlining the historical context; then the paper explores a few key sites and questions the degree to which we can claim an understanding of Istria and its settlement profile under the Carolingians.

The Origins and Fates of Istrian Fortified Settlements

Topographic surveys inform us of more than 420 prehistoric (from Bronze Age to Late Iron Age) hilltop settlements – called usually *castellieri* – in Istria, in a territory of roughly 3,000 km2 (Buršić-Matijašić and Matijašić 2013, 182). Not many of these survived into classical times: while a high number of those settlements were abandoned, some became proto-urban and urban centres, notably Poreč and Pula. At *Fianona* (Plomin), we see an instance of a Roman relocation of settlement, to the coastal plain, but with a return to hilltop occupation in Late Antiquity (Buršić-Matijašić and Matijašić 2013, 186). Similar sequences occur at *Alvona* (Albona, Labin), *Piquentum* (Buzet) and *Rotium* (Roč, Rozzo).

After the Roman conquest, the processes of colonisation and associated centuriation obviously changed the rural landscape. So far there is archaeological evidence of more than 200 new settlements, mostly *villae* with residential, productive or a combined function (Matijašić 1994). The distribution of *villae* shows that the majority face the sea or lie along the River Mirna (Quieto); only a few occur in the hinterland (i.e. outside the centuriated zone), which, potentially, was left to the autochthonous Histri. The most important communications remained the maritime routes although the *via Flavia* (renewed in the second half of the 1st century AD) connected *Tergeste* with *Parentium* and *Pola*; perhaps surprisingly, however, there is still no evidence of any strong connection between *villae* and this key road axis (Buršić-Matijašić and Matijašić 2013, 191). Istria does appear a productive region for grain, oil and wine, with exports to Italy, especially to the late Roman and Byzantine capital of Ravenna, well attested. This will have enabled an extended life to some villas.

Late Antiquity brought changes to Istria, as everywhere in the Roman world. In brief, the *villae* were gradually abandoned, but with

some transformed into fortified settlements, such as *Civitas Nova* (Novigrad, Cittanova), *Humagum* (Umag) and the *castrum* on the island of Brijuni-Brioni (Buršić-Matijašić and Matijašić 2013, 192). Some of the later prehistoric hilltop settlements were repopulated, including *Ursaria* (Vrsar, Orsero), *Ruginium* (Rovinj, Rovigno) and *Piranon* (Piran) (Miclaus 2004, 228). One related question, therefore, is the rate and chronology of abandonment of *villae* and the relocation of population groups in *castella*. How early do changes begin? Is it as early as the 4th century? Historiography has frequently portrayed the Istrian landscape as a danger zone, reflecting changing security in the Empire: there are two main chronological sequences, the first one linked to a linear concept of defence with the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarium* instigated in the 4th century in the north-east of Italy and extending to the Adriatic (Miclaus 2004, 226); the second phase sees an increasing number of fortified *castra* deep in Istrian territory, already from the 4th/5th century according to Marušić (1973–75, 342). While the pattern might be correct in general terms, in reality there are too few secure archaeological data currently to confirm it.

Similarly, too few data exist to guide us on what happens in Istria between the 6th century and the second half of the 8th. But there is some scope to question the general opinion regarding the abandonment of *villae* and the 'castrisation' or 'militarisation' of the landscape. Recent excavation – albeit fairly limited in scale – of a Roman *villa* near the fortified settlement of Guran in southern Istria offers intriguing traces of activity contrary to established opinion on fates and loss: the *villa*, set up in the 1st century AD, remained active into Late Antiquity (Terrier *et al*. 2009, 370); after a substantial change of functions of the site's different spatial units in the 6th century, a church was built on the fringes of the *villa*. Firm evidence exists that this church endured across the 7th–8th centuries until the period of Carolingian occupation, and later saw remodelling (see below); the villa's status in that period is much less clear.

Slavic colonisation, from the end of the 6th century onward, did not wreak massive destruction on Istria and instead appears to have been relatively peaceful (Levak 2011). After a fairly short period of raids and damage around AD 600, as documented from Italy by Pope Gregory I and Paul the Deacon (Levak 2007, 45), when the Slavs penetrated fully to the coast bringing destruction to *Nesactium* or

Vrsar, by the mid-7th century they seemingly had settled mostly in inner Istria, east of the *via Flavia*, clearly in search of new lands and not military conquest. There is no indication that they set up either political or military organisations, nor did they act as new elites. This is the main reason why it was possible for Byzantine power to be restored across all of Istria in the second half of the 7th century (Levak 2008, 47). It is worth observing that the position of the Istrian peninsula, protected by the mountain range of Ćićarija and the sea, made it something of a refuge zone in Late Antiquity, such as for people fleeing from Pannonia (Bratož 2007); this also generated a level of economic revival, evident in ceramic imports and goods movement, and in terms of investment in churches in urban centres especially.

Thus, for the late 8th century, one might argue for what might be termed a fairly well preserved late antique landscape in Istria, at least on the coast, despite growing levels of upland rural nucleation and the failure of some settlements. Although we suspect new fortified settlements were being built, and some old ones repopulated, current evidence is scarce and scattered. At the beginning of Carolingian rule, as stated in the 'Placito de Risana', besides the leading towns of *Pola*, *Parentium* and *Civitas Nova* (Pula being the only one described as *civitas*), we hear of foci such as Labin, Buzet, Pićan, Motovun (Montona) and Rovinj. Later documents, from the 9th century, refer to other settlement sites, of mixed military-rural form and role, some of which slowly became urbanised, like Buje (Buie) and Rovinj, as well as Dvigrad (Duecastelli), which was of predominantly military function. More early medieval settlements are recognisable by their shape and general layout, evolving from pre-Roman antecedents, such as at Sv. Lovreč (S. Lorenzo del Pasenatico), Bale (Valle), Mormorano and Grožnjan (Grisignano). The material evidence mostly relates to churches that are often the only early medieval remnant in the permanent transformations of living settlements, as in Bale or Dvigrad. Otherwise sometimes only fragments of early medieval liturgical furnishings signify the existence of a former church, as proposed for Motovun and Lovreč. But actual archaeological excavations have been undertaken only in Dvigrad, Guran and Stari Gočan (Golzana Vecchia) making secure statements problematic.

One of the reasons for our limited understanding of early medieval

fortified settlements lies in their fates. Substantial changes in the monumental and settlement landscape of Istria occurred at the end of the Middle Ages, when a great number of settlements failed, mostly after a series of severe plague epidemics in the 14th and 15th centuries; some remained as ruins, others were reclaimed by nature, such as woodland, and largely lost. Only churches in the landscape preserve the memory of these lost settlements. But there were other reasons for the abandonment of fortified settlements, such as the relocation (forced and 'natural') of population groups or the merging of weakened sites. One case is most instructive: in southern Istria, 10–15 km north of Pula, sources mention seven settlements in the 12th century: Guran, Gusan, Vodnjan (Dignano), Banjole (Bagnole), Midnjan, Sveti Lovro (St Laurence) and Sveti Petar (St Peter). All but one of these was abandoned after AD 1300, their populations leaving to regroup in Vodnjan (Ghiraldo 2000). This pattern of loss is of course ideal for archaeological research, with the quitted sites lacking post-medieval layers, except at the churches that were in many instances maintained for some time afterwards. Yet the character of loss can prove a real challenge for archaeological surveys in the territory; in fact only recently were the sites of Guran (Terrier *et al.* 2005) and Gusan (Janko 2011; see below) located on the ground; meanwhile the church of St Michael in Banjole has been rediscovered, but the related settlement is yet to be pinpointed (Barada and Mustač 2008); and the ruins of Midnjan have recently been found in dense woodland (ibid., 156), but without excavations yet conducted there. Preliminary indications are that Guran was a fortified settlement from around AD 800; Gusan was a fortified villa, so far with only early medieval material found; the church of St Michael in Banjole is documented from the 11th century but has late antique and early medieval precursors. In effect, there are different types, trajectories and fates to these fortified sites that have to be examined.

In contrast, the fate of those settlements that became fortified burgs in the High and Late Middle Ages is much different: almost all of them remain active spaces, most with a long sequence of changes that have transformed their original shapes.

In sum, there are problems on how much can be discussed currently in early medieval Istria. Besides the functioning of the fortified settlement, the distribution and organisation of single spatial

units, the details and morphology of the architecture, two more general questions can be addressed: firstly, what was the role of the fortified settlements in the territorial organisation of the Frankish rule in Istria, and secondly, what is known of the transformation of the monumental settlement landscape? We can draw mainly on isolated examples; otherwise, the only programmed archaeological survey is that centred on the fortified settlement of Guran, which guides usefully on the spatial organisation of a micro-topographic area, and on communications, landscape organisation, agricultural activity and even defensive systems.

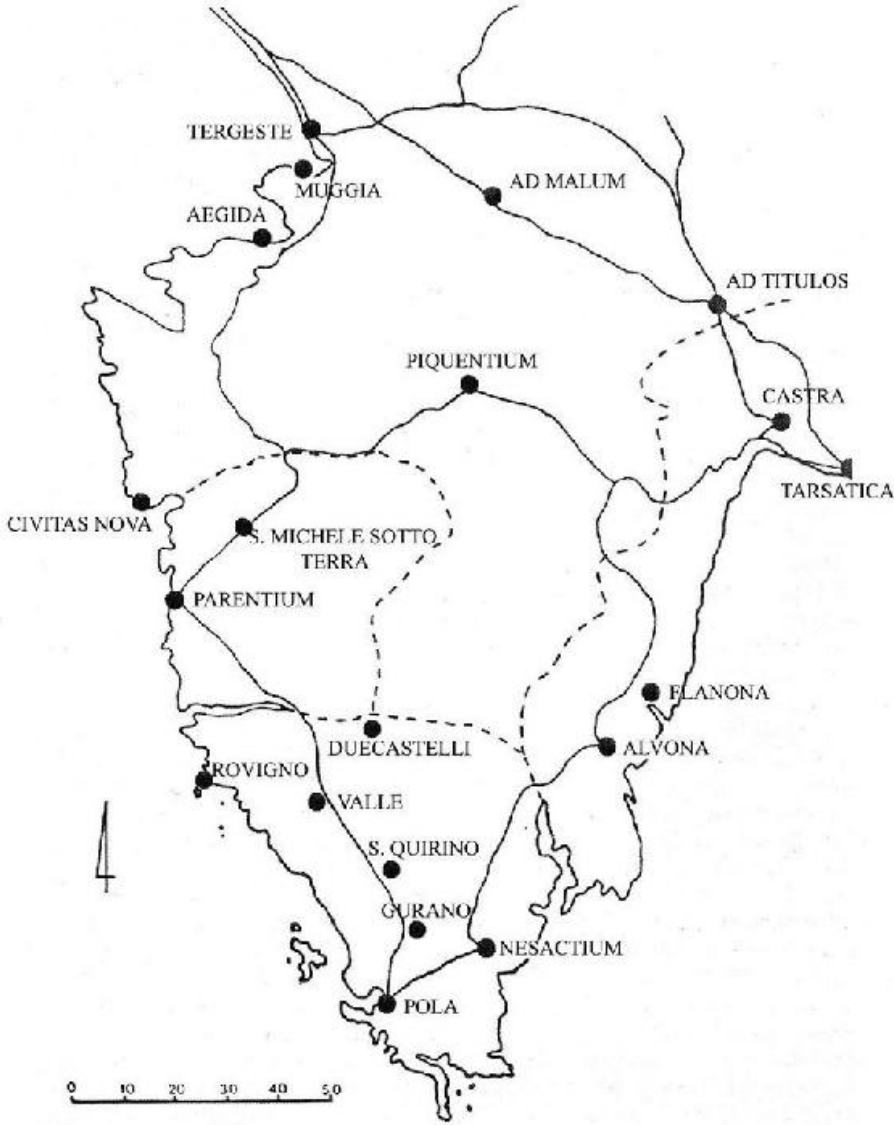

Figure 18.1. Istria around AD 800 showing the Roman roads, the late antique diocesis, and Carolingian churches and settlements (Map after Matijašić, modified by Jurković and Basić).

Carolingian Istria

Although not strictly confirmed by sources, the year AD 788 is usually taken by historians as the date of the Carolingian conquest of Istria, until then part of the Byzantine Empire, albeit with a possible short

phase of Lombard control after the fall of the Exarchate of Ravenna in 751. The first task of consolidation by the new power was, as elsewhere, the territorial, political and ecclesiastical re-organisation (Jurković and Basić 2009) (Fig. 18.1).

The Franks' political and ecclesiastical focus was *Civitas Nova* (Novigrad, Cittanova), where, as stated in the Placito, was sited the seat of the Duke. A cathedral was built at the time of Bishop Mauritius/Maurice, who is mentioned in a letter of Pope Hadrian to Charlemagne in 776–780 as *episcopus histriensis*. He can be viewed as a court bishop overseeing the whole region who was thus expected to collect the *pensiones beati Petri* (Jurković and Basić 2009, 289). This arguably shows the expansionist politics of Charlemagne even before the conquest of Istria: the bishop was subject to the Francophile patriarch of Aquileia, his seat effectively girded by the bishoprics of Trieste, Poreč and Pula, which were, until AD 827, under the patriarchate of Grado, then Byzantine. The strong links that Bishop Mauritius forged with the political centre of Cividale and the ecclesiastical one at Aquileia, are evident in both architecture and sculpture. For example, the cathedral crypt of *Civitas Nova* is a smaller scale copy of that in Aquileia (Matejčić 2006). The sculptors working on the liturgical furnishings of the cathedral came from two different workshops, one probably from Rome, since analysis reveals comparisons with Rome's churches of the time of Pope Hadrian. The other workshop relates to the famous, so-called 'Master of the Bale capitals', with its sculptors engaged at practically all the churches built in the first decades of the Carolingian expansion in Istria (Jurković 2002). In addition, Bishop Mauritius is known to have ordered a ciborium for his baptistery from the workshop of Cividale (Jurković 1995).

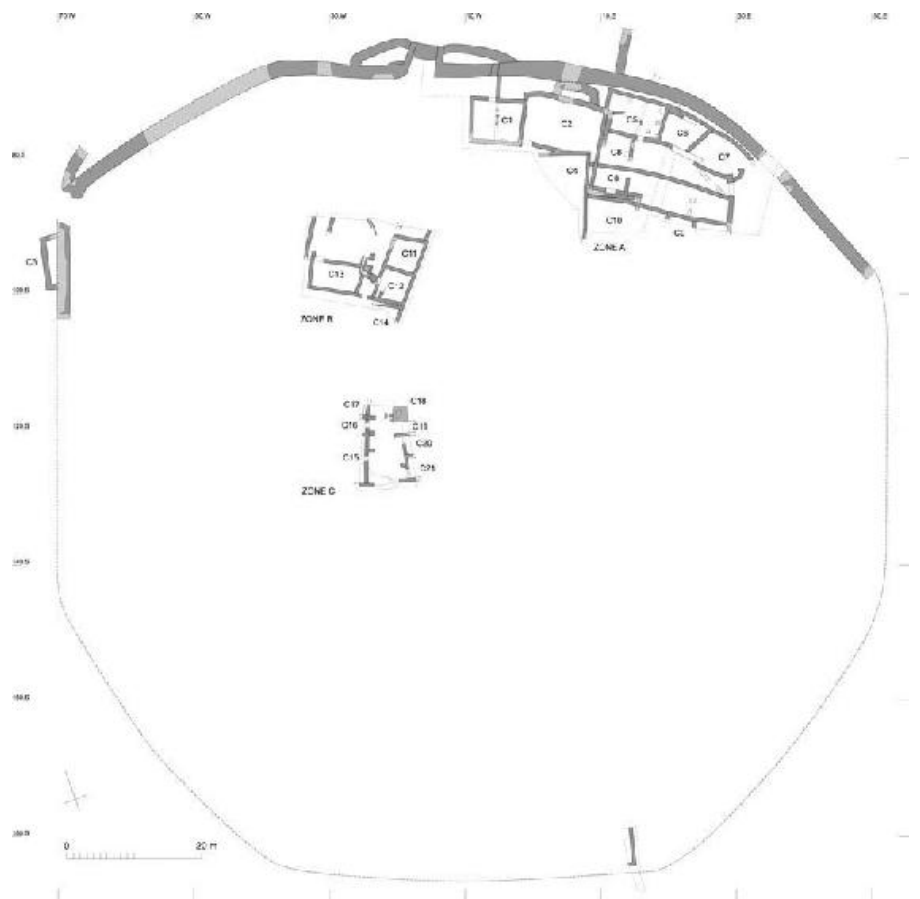

Figure 18.2. Guran, schematic plan of excavated zones, 2012 (Plan drawn by Marion Berti).

The capital of *Civitas Nova* was well chosen. It can be viewed as a 'new' town even if its roots lay in a late Roman *castrum*. Set on the coast, positioned between two (initially hostile) bishoprics, Trieste and Poreč, away from the *via Flavia*, control of the main road axis was left to the fortified settlements, especially in the south towards the old bishopric of Pula (Lovreč, Bale and Guran). The transversal road alongside the channel of Lim, connecting the sea with the hinterland, lay under the control of Dvigrad (see below). The northern transversal route to the Ćićarija mountain range was controlled by the sites of Buje, Motovun and Buzet.

The foundation of monasteries contributed to the consolidation of power as well as the installation or reworking of private estates, these flagged now only by remnant churches. The Carolingian monasteries were erected at strategic positions: thus the abbey of Santa Maria Alta,

built *c*. AD 800, overlooked the Bale to Rovinj routeway (Jurković 2001, 156), which terminated at the small island in front of Rovinj with its monastery of St Andrew (Matejčić 2001, 349). In the northern part of the Istrian peninsula, the monastery of St Michael was established near the old Roman road and the crossroads to *Civitas Nova*.

The Carolingian conquest of Istria was in reality only completed in AD 827 when the old bishoprics of Trieste, Poreč and Pula became suffragans to the Patriarch of Aquileia. During the 9th and 10th centuries the process of 'feudalisation' contributed to the remodelling of the landscape; however, the enormous financial investments evident in the first decades of Carolingian rule were not matched again.

Thus a very striking and perhaps logical transformation of the Istrian landscape occurred at the end of the 8th century, instigated by both ecclesiastical and social elites in order to control the whole territory; and in this 'revised' landscape fortified settlements will have played a crucial role (Jurković and Basić 2009).

The Archaeology of Fortified Sites

Guran

Guran is the only early medieval settlement in Istria where systematic archaeological investigation has so far been undertaken. Located *c*. 2.5 km north east of Vodnjan, it is first mentioned in sources in 1150 as one of seven medieval settlements in the surrounding area (De Franceschi 1939–40, 160). Although its existence has been known for over a century (Schiavuzzi 1908, 109), actual settlement remains were discovered only at the beginning of the present century, some 60 m south west from the known, previously excavated basilica (Terrier *et al*. 2005, 328–330). Of probable polygonal or oval plan (Figs 18.2 and 18.11), excavations have revealed the northern portion of the site's ramparts, for some 150 m (Fig. 18.3). Within the perimeter, only a small sector in the north and two other spaces towards the centre were investigated, but these do provide fair data to frame the site's evolution of the settlement in the *longue durée*, until its abandonment at the end of the Middle Ages (Terrier *et al*. 2014). In fact, although a few pre-Roman sherds were recovered, Guran was likely built *ex*

nihilo, with radiocarbon dating of charcoal samples from the walk-space between the ramparts and the probable guardroom (see below), suggesting a foundation date of *c*. AD 800 (Terrier *et al.* 2006, 264).

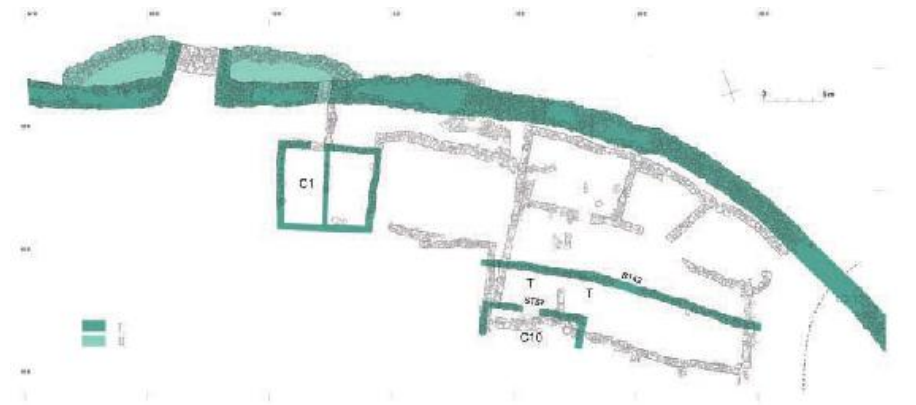

Figure 18.3. Guran, plan of the northern walls, phases I and II (Plan drawn by Marion Berti).

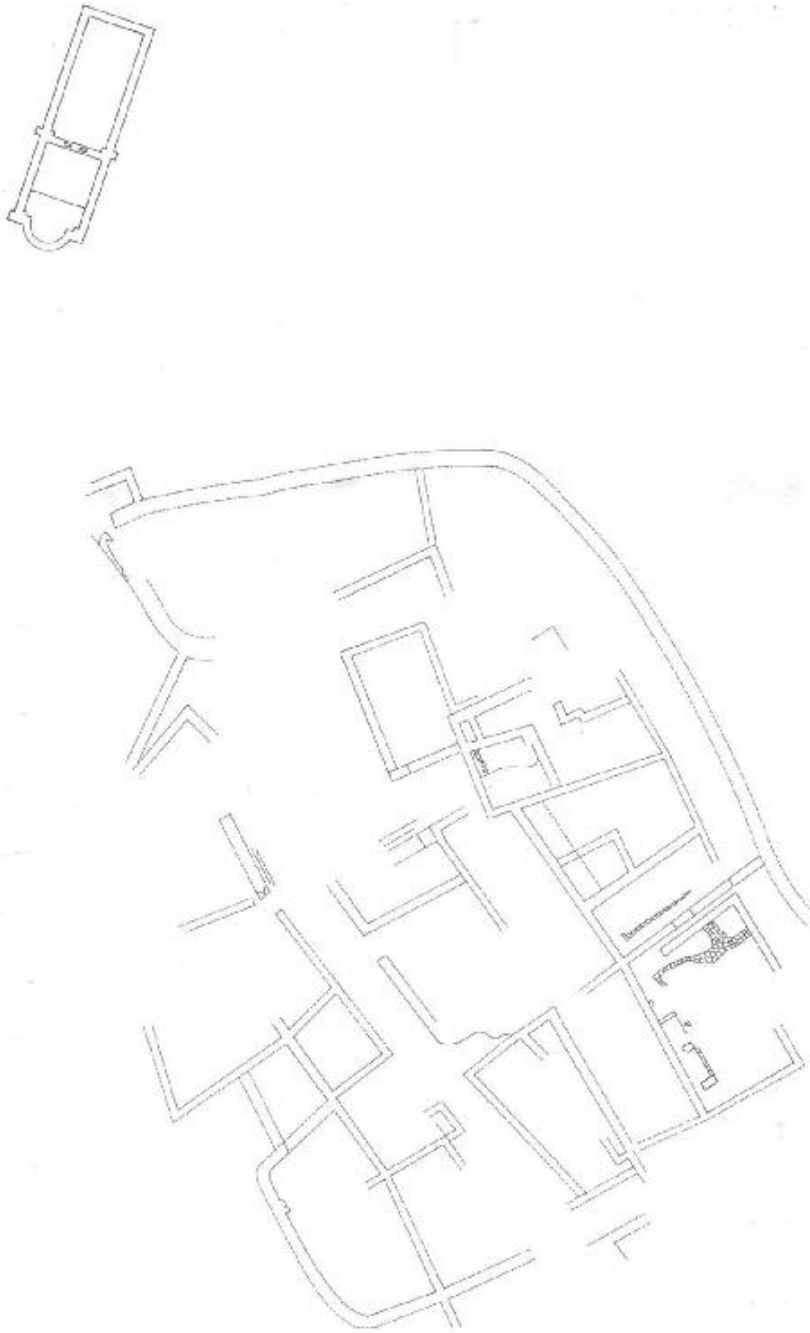

Figure 18.4. Stari Gočan, plan of the excavated area by Marušić 1950 (Image courtesy of the Arheološki Muzej Istre, Pula).

The curtain wall as revealed was *c*. 2.0 m thick, set over the bedrock; its outer faces were built of large blocks of local stone, while

the core features smaller stones. The wall's height is unknown; quite probably it supported a wooden palisade. One likely projecting rectangular tower has been identified in the north-west of the curtain wall (Terrier *et al.* 2007, 401–402). A monumental entrance was set in the middle of the wall, facing the church some 60 m to its north, and opening onto a branch of the medieval road leading to Vodnjan. The entranceway was reinforced with walls turning at an angle of 90 degrees northwards, thereby forming a deeper entrance space. While the eastern 'arm' of this gate passage is right-angled, the western side is slightly curved, perhaps designed to allow easier turning for carts entering the settlement and heading right, westwards, flanking the wall perimeter. Between the circuit wall and the first line of internal houses was a gap, presumably an intramural lane; east of the northern (main?) entrance, this 'lane' is generated through provision of terracing some 10 m south of the defensive wall (Terrier *et al.* 2011, 250) (Fig. 18.3).

A final defensive component is the possible guards' block, a building situated 3.0 m south of the wall and close to the main entrance (Terrier *et al.* 2007, 398). Of sub-rectangular shape, its walls, 0.6 m thick, are constructed with quarried stones, but with very limited mortar bonding; these are unlikely to have supported a stone superstructure (and indeed the destruction level lacked extensive stone debris). Internally partitioned, the building had a door on its north flank, facing the rampart; the floor comprised levelling of the bedrock by small flat stones and a beaten earth covering. A radiocarbon date from a sample taken from the mortar in the western wall indicates a possible construction after AD 860, and thus a little later in date than the ramparts.

In a second phase, the site's outer curtain wall was doubled in thickness either side of the main gate, while a smaller postern east of the main entranceway was blocked (Terrier *et al.* 2006, 261–263).

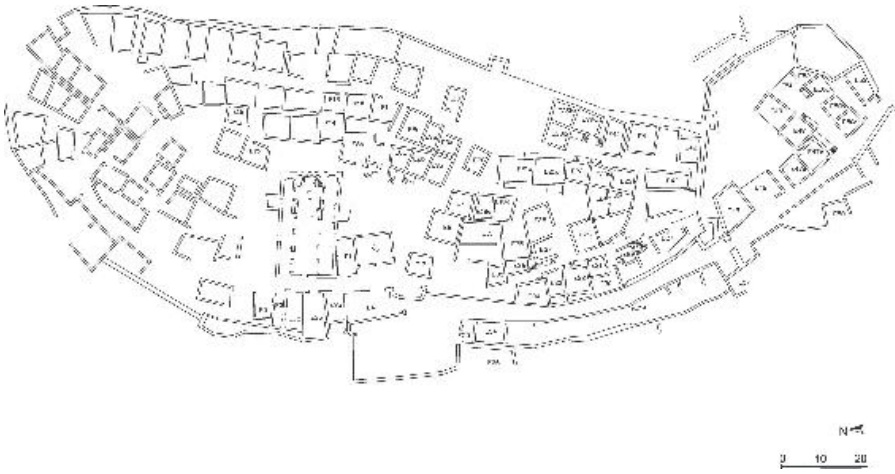

Figure 18.5. Dvigrad, plan (After Brogiolo et al. 2003).

Stari Gočan and Dvigrad

Two other fortified settlements have seen partial excavation: Stari Gočan and Dvigrad. Stari Gočan (Fig. 18.4) was in fact the first post-classical fortified settlement to be excavated in Istria, in the 1950s; unfortunately never fully published, only preliminary reports are available for the investigations (Marušić 1973–75, 343; Marušić 1987, 116). Founded on a low hilltop between Barban and Svetvinčenat, at the north-east edge of the *ager centuriatus* of Pula, it has late prehistoric roots, but was only abandoned in the Late Middle Ages. In Late Antiquity (5th/6th century AD based on ceramics, but precise dating is impossible due to unpublished material) new fortification walls were built over the pre-Roman ones, these then remodelled in the Early Middle Ages. The settlement has an oval layout with a main street on the longitudinal axis and another one following the inner face of the walls. The walls feature eight rectangular towers, and another lay central to the settlement. Within the fortified area a few houses have been excavated. The dating of these, as well as the central tower and the ramparts, is based only on the ceramics and set to the 9th–10th centuries. A small single nave extramural church is meanwhile dated on the basis of a few sculptural fragments to the 8th/9th century according to Marušić (1987, 116), but to the 8th century in my opinion.

Dvigrad (Duecastelli) is an abandoned site, but one of extended occupation, failing only in the 17th century. Retaining its late

medieval shape (Fig. 18.5), the settlement is of pre-Roman origin. It held a strong position at the end of the Lim fjord and its harbour, controlling the most important transversal axis in Istria, namely the road from the sea to the hinterland, and alongside the Roman road from Pula to Lovreč via Bale. The origin of the name Dvigrad, meaning 'two towns/fortresses', relates to the presence of two fortified settlements, both on rocky hilltops. The actual Dvigrad is the former Moncastello, whereas the northern unit, Castel Parentin, slowly faded in the Early Middle Ages. The name of the Lim channel should derive from the Latin *limes*, with Dvigrad already in the late Roman period part of the internal defensive system of Pula's *ager centuriatus*. However, the earliest sources for Dvigrad–Moncastello are from AD 879, when Church jurisdiction switched from Pula to Aquileia, and in 965 when the Patriach of Aquileia gave the authority to collect the taxes to the bishop of Poreč (Schiavuzzi 1920, 87–88).

While the extant ruins of Dvigrad point to the medieval and post-medieval epochs, multiple small-scale excavations enable some interpretation of the site's early medieval configuration. Its centre occupies elevated ground, from where the main square, on levelled bedrock, and the church of St Sophia dominate the rest of the settlement. The first church, of late antique date, was of rectangular plan (*c*. 12 × 7.70 m) with an eastern apse (Brogiolo *et al*. 2003, 133). In the Early Middle Ages a new church was built, again of single nave design, but with three semi-circular eastern apses, decorated on their outer faces with pilaster strips and internally frescoed (Marušić 1971).

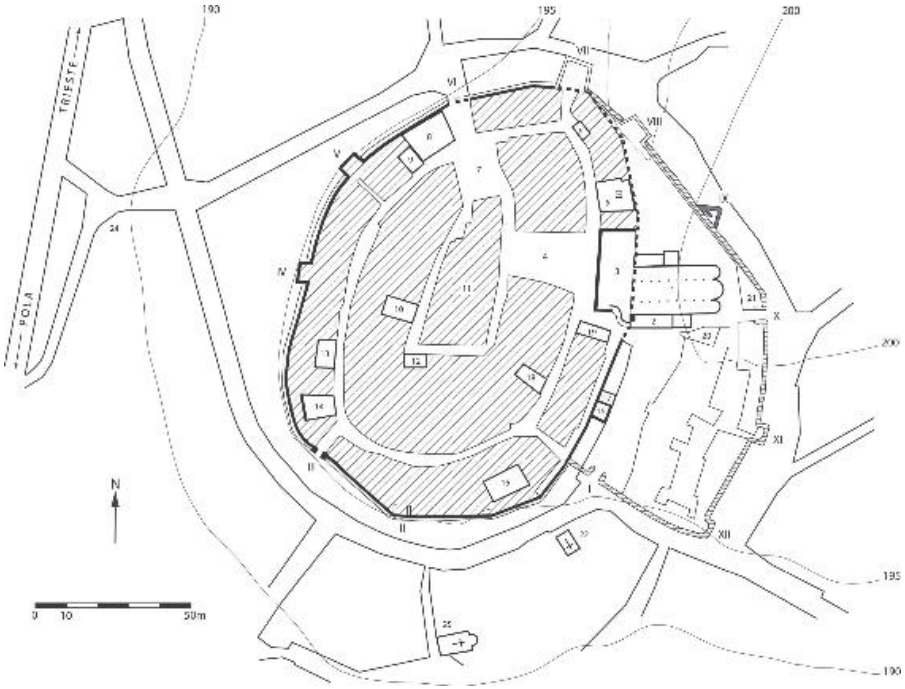

Figure 18.6. Sv. Lovreč, plan (After Mirabella Roberti 1979–80, redrawn by Michael A. Hawkes).

The settlement itself by then had expanded southwards, with defensive walls set up – these underlying the late medieval circuit. Excavations have sampled the fortifications in the site's south-western and south-eastern angles. The related material evidence resembles that from the early medieval church, dating to the later 8th and 9th centuries (Brogiolo *et al.* 2003, 143). Small-scale excavation has also revealed a cemetery beyond the site's south-east corner, seemingly utilised from the 5th to late 10th century (Marušić 1970).

Lovreč and Bale

While most other fortified settlements in Istria currently offer limited evidence of their role and contents in the central part of the Early Middle Ages, two sites, Lovreč and Bale, do provide some useful data.

Sveti Lovreč (San Lorenzo del Pasenatico) (Fig. 18.6) in the 10th century was the centre of the fief of the bishop of Poreč. Positioned on the Roman road to Poreč, it is probably pre-Roman in origin, featuring an oval plan (*c.* 102 × 150 m) with two concentric streets with radially positioned transversal ones. The oldest portion of the

ramparts goes back to the central part of the Early Middle Ages (Marušić 1987, 118). The walls, although just 80 cm thick, are preserved to a height of 7.0 m. In the 11th century a substantial three-naved basilica was established just outside the walls (Mirabella Roberti 1979–80). Remnant early medieval liturgical furniture indicates a (potentially Carolingian) precursor. A few hundred metres outside of the settlement lay a cemetery and a single nave apsidal church of the 9th century, as dated by very high quality limestone liturgical fittings.

Often churches are the only built/extant evidence that we have to attribute early medieval roots to these fortified settlements. This is the case with the active site of Bale (Valle) (Fig. 18.7). Bale's medieval oval layout is still visible, despite subsequent transformations. The modern church here lies over a much smaller one dating from 1588, which itself appears to have been a replacement to an even smaller early medieval edifice (Matejčić 1996, 136). No remains exist of the first church, but we can draw on two detailed descriptions written a few years before the destruction and drawings done in 1841 (Gnirs 1915, 160–162).

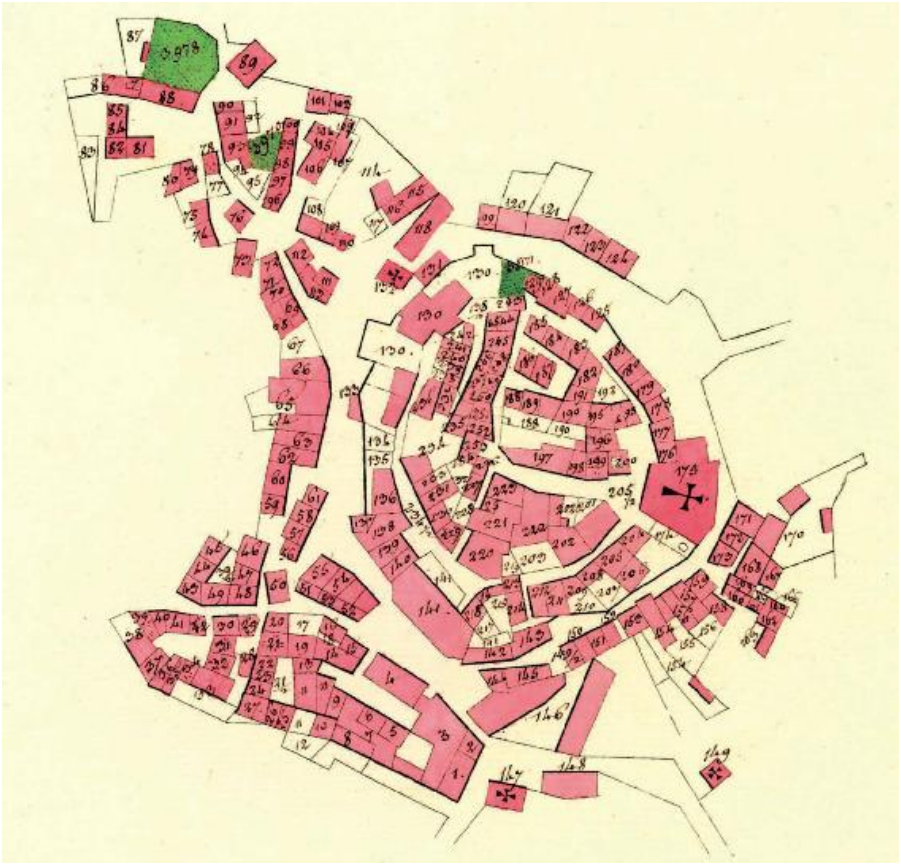

Figure 18.7. Bale, cadastral plan, 1820.

Sites in the Landscape; Layouts and Ramparts

While scarce in terms of written sources and landscape surveys, nonetheless some patterns in the spatial organisation, landscape setting, defensive design and church and cemetery provision for these early medieval fortified sites can be observed.

In terms of origins, some of these fortified settlements have Bronze/Iron Age antecedents: for example, Buzet, Motovun, Buje, Sveti Lovreč, Dvigrad, Bale, Rovinj and Stari Gočan. Others develop on/over Roman structures: thus, late antique Banjole, as its name suggests, is focussed around a former Roman thermal complex (Barada and Mustač 2008, 155); and survey work at Midnjan indicates that this settlement originated from/over a Roman structure with a productive function. The most recent survey identified a large church that can be provisionally dated to the early 9th century. But there are

also some newly-founded early medieval seats, including Guran, established around the end of the 8th century.

The positioning of these fortified settlements in the landscape often depended on strategic needs. After all, not every one of the known 400 later prehistoric settlements was repopulated in Late Antiquity or the Early Middle Ages. Key are sites located on highways such as the Roman road from Trieste to Pula (*e.g.* Buje, Lovreč, Dvigrad and Bale) or along and overlooking the obligatory passages from the interior to the coast (*e.g.* Buzet and Motovun). The choice from late Roman times was territorial defence-in-depth, whereas in Carolingian times it was more the control of the landscape and its resources. For the Carolingian period, investment in these sites is evident especially in church provisioning and their high quality, imported art and architecture (*e.g.* at Dvigrad, Bale and Guran). The importance of the position of these fortified settlements is also reflected in their subsequent trajectories: in the Middle Ages they all became fortified burgs.

However, we can detect different roles and/or a different rank for a group of lowland fortified settlements in southern Istria, including Banjole, Midnjan and Gusan. These all lay inside the *ager centuriatus* of Pula, on secondary communications lines and on fertile land, signifying their economic rather than defensive priority. Of these, Gusan lay on the Roman road from Pula to Bale. Recent rescue excavations have unearthed half of a building complex (32 × 25 m) with both residential and productive functions and fortified by walls 1.0 m thick; the small finds, ceramics and metalwork indicate a date of the 8th–10th centuries (Janko 2011) (Fig. 18.8).

The general layout of the fortified settlements is, when discernable, often related to the site's origins/roots. The generally oval plans reflect the pre-Roman/late prehistoric substructure, which may also be traced in the 'spiderweb' organisation of the street layout with concentric main streets (as seen at Bale and Lovreč). Typical planning includes a sort of acropolis, usually higher ground in the centre of the settlement, hosting the main piazza and a church (*e.g.* Bale, Dvigrad, Rovinj, Buje and Motovun). The current level of research does not allow for any more detailed conclusions, except in the case of Dvigrad where the excavation evidence has revealed a central acropolis with a southern extension in the 8th/9th century (Brogiolo *et al.* 2003, 137).

For the early medieval defences, the evidence is limited due to later transformations which mask earlier arrangements. However, portions of circuit walls in Lovreč, recently discovered walls in Dvigrad and those at Gusan overall point to fortifications in stone, although Guran in all probability had a wooden palisade set over a stone base. Ramparts were likely strengthened with rectangular towers, as seen at Gočan and Guran. The central tower at Gočan implies a residential function, and thus recalls some very rare, but similar examples like Castello della Motta in neighbouring (Italian) Friuli (Piuzzi 2000, 135).

Figure 18.8. Gusan, excavated zone, aerial view (Image courtesy of the Arheološki Muzej Istre, Pula).

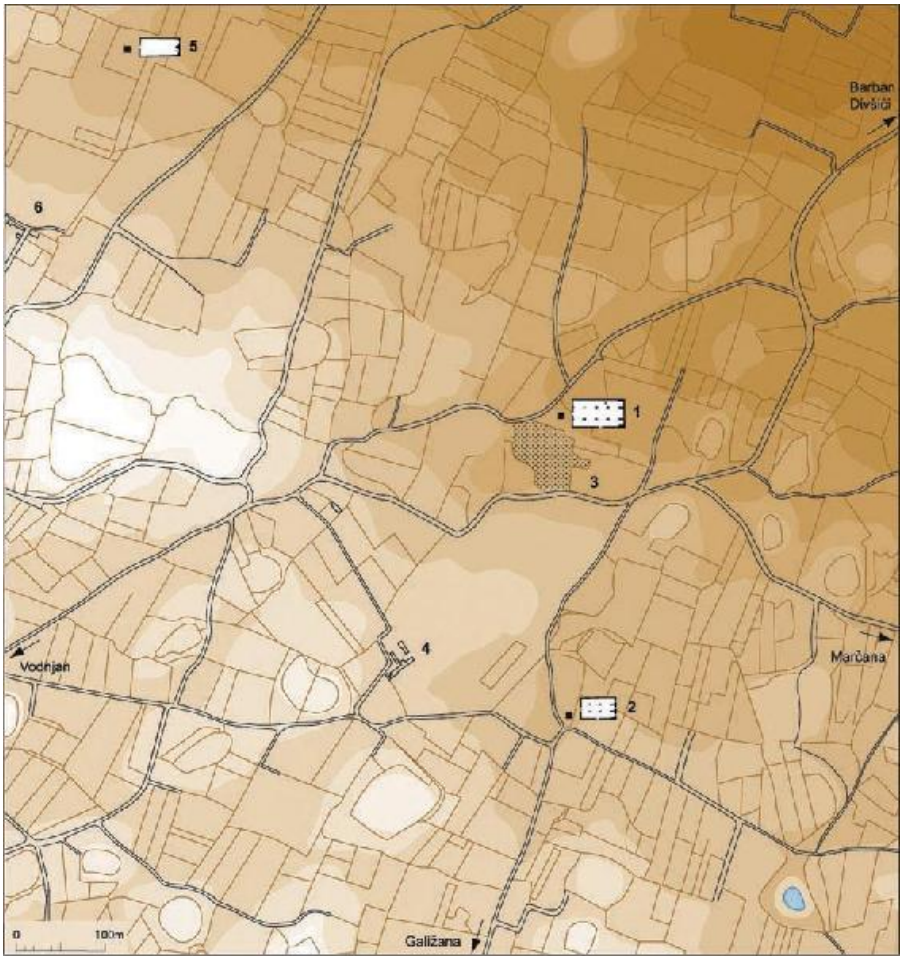

Figure 18.9. Guran and environs. Map drawn on the basis of old land cadastral plans: 1 - basilica; 2 - cemetery and church of St Simon; 3 - fortified settlement; 4 and 6 - modern hamlets; 5 - Roman villa with church of St Cecilia (Map drawn by Marion Berti).

Churches Within and Outside the Fortified Area

Churches are often the only evidence of former early medieval fortified settlements. Importantly, there is frequently a pattern in their spatial disposition, with a main church in an elevated, sometimes central position; excavation, *spolia* or stray liturgical fittings (choir screens, etc.) help identify early medieval precursors to extant, more modern edifices, as at Motovun and Rovinj. And outside the fortified area, as documented in Lovreč, Guran, Dvigrad and Gočan, may be found both cemetery and funerary church.

There are, however, some variations to this general pattern. Some

sizeable churches were also extramural, such as at Lovreč, where it was built almost against the outer face of the defences; the standing church is of the 11th century, but with fragments of earlier medieval liturgical fittings. At Guran, a large triple-naved basilica was erected some 60 m north east of the principal gate, perhaps contemporaneously with the settlement itself; and *c*. 300 m south of the settlement lay a cemetery with its church of St Simon, probably both commencing in the 9th century (Fig. 18.9 and 18.11; see below). Do these examples indicate that the internal built space lacked space or was there some other factor for locating them outside the defences?

The churches show a varied typology of ground plans, ranging from simple, single nave churches with an apse to triple-naved basilicas. These plans reflect two main architectural streams in early medieval Istria: the single nave design perhaps marked a continuity from late Roman models; in fact, the first churches in Banjole and Dvigrad are late antique in date. Some early medieval churches differ in having a rectangular apse (*e.g.* St Simon in Guran).

Other types are totally new to Istria and represent imported types. The single nave church with three semi-circular apses in Bale (Matejčić 1996, 133–139), as well as its variant with three apses built into a flat eastern wall as at Dvigrad (Marušić 1974) are common types in northern Italy and southern Switzerland, *i.e.* in the territory of the Patriarchates of Aquileia and Milan, and chronologically in vogue in the later Lombard period and the first decades of the Carolingian (Jurković 2001, 158). A major Istrian example is the three-naved basilica at Guran, second only to the cathedral of *Civitas Nova* in size (Jurković 2013, 32).

The liturgical fittings of these three latter churches were sculpted by craftsmen from the so-called 'Master of the Bale capitals' workshop, named after the masterful carved capitals of the colonnade of the abbey church of Santa Maria Alta near Bale. The workshop's output chiefly dates to the later 8th and early 9th century (Jurković 2002). Its craftsmen also contributed to the cathedral in *Civitas Nova* and the church of St Thomas near Rovinj – the latter a private estate church of a Carolingian nobleman (judging by its privileged tomb). In fact it can be claimed that the workshop was involved in every single monument of the earlier Carolingian period in Istria. Together with the importation of architectural types, this reveals the importance given to

these ecclesiastical monuments by the elites – cathedral, monasteries, private churches, and those in the main fortified settlements.

A Settlement and Surroundings: Guran

Too little is understood of these sites in their landscape. One of the very few sites with wider survey is Guran, although this ongoing work has covered a radius of under a kilometre. It has identified the noted extramural basilica and cemetery with church, plus a Roman *villa rustica* (Jurković 2013) (Figs 18.9 and 18.10). In terms of the villa, this lay *c*. 500 m north west of the settlement, occupying fairly elevated ground, with cultivated, arable space around, and near the road connecting the north and south of the peninsula.

This relatively modest farm underwent functional changes in the 5th and 6th centuries, based on ceramic finds (Terrier *et al*. 2014, 299). Subsequently a church was inserted, exploiting a former rectangular room of uncertain earlier function, perhaps a *fanum*, to which was added a semi-circular apse; the apse overlies a layer dated to the 5th/6th century by ceramics. The church was therefore built probably in the second half of the 6th century, and appears to have still functioned in the 7th/8th centuries, as indicated by radiocarbon analysis of several charcoal samples within the floor mortar (Terrier *et al*. 2012, 438). There were then modifications in the Carolingian period, when the semi-circular apse was replaced by a rectangular choir with a grave set beneath the altar, and the nave was extended westwards, preceded now by an annex (perhaps a Carolingian Westwerk, the first in Istria), giving a total length of 19 m (Terrier *et al*. 2012, 439) (Fig. 18.9 n.5).

Figure 18.10. Guran, graveyard and St Simon on medieval crossroads, aerial view (Photo: D. Car).

As noted, the basilica on the outskirts of the site (Fig. 18.11) is one of the largest early medieval churches in Istria and is a structure featuring works by the 'Master of Bale capitals' team, notably the altar screen and ambo. Strikingly, there were three 'block altars' with reliquaries and a likely reliquary tomb was positioned prominently in the middle of the northern aisle, clearly impacting on movement here. These features combine to indicate a signficant church with relics and extended space: might it be viewed as an episcopal structure, or one related to a wealthy local noble, or could one read into this a pilgrimage church? The church looks towards the road that leads, hugging the north-west side of the settlement, towards Vodnjan.

To the south at Guran, the cemetery lies at a crossroads with one route leading to the settlement and then Vodnjan, a second towards Pula and the third north eastwards (Figs 18.9 and 18.10). The associated church initially was of single nave form; notably, it featured an early privileged tomb set against the southern wall, potentially signifying a founder's burial. Unfortunately, reuse/reworking of the tomb (see Marušić 1963) means that no precise dating can be given to its primary phase. The church was extended westwards with a rectangular choir added on the eastern side (Terrier *et al.* 2014, 296); C14 dating of charcoal sampled in a furnace cut by

the new façade gave a date range of 880–1031 (ibid., 295). A possibility is that these changes coincided with the reinforcement of the settlement's main gate and the remodelling of the church in the nearby former Roman *villa*.

Conclusion

As highlighted in the Introduction, the proceedings of the 'Plea of Rižana' are a prime witness not only of the transfer of Istria from Byzantine to Carolingian rule, but above all of the profound social changes that had taken place on the territory and the impact it had on the economy, on politics and administration and on the Istrian Church. Arguably, it points to the change from a more classical form of social and landed organisation to a medieval one. In the Plea, Istrian landowners made a series of accusations against Duke John, the Frankish provincial administrator, concerning lands taken from municipalities and the Church and distributed to the Slavs. The old elites were evidently being deprived of their privileges, their positions in society and their rights to hold administrative posts and political power, and were facing new taxes (Levak 2007, 104).

Figure 18.11. Guran, fortified settlement, northern ramparts and the triple-nave basilica, aerial view (Photo: D. Car).

Arguably, the fortified settlements discussed above were necessary in this new climate. A number of them reflect the political realities of the time, being military outposts in the first decades of the Carolingian rule; these may have been controlled by trusted Frankish officials who were also given lands to oversee. Some of those officials may well have been buried in privileged tombs, such as the ones identified at St Simon in Guran and St Thomas near Rovinj, and perhaps originally buried in decorated sarcophagi, like that preserved in Bale. But not all were 'military' or 'strategic' sites: as seen, some occupied open landscape positions and depict thereby economic concerns; their defended character reflects the wider character of site definition in this period. What remains to be determined is when exactly these sites took shape, whether local rural populations were transferred to them or if they evolved from refuges to formal settlements. Potentially, of course, future surveys may reveal that there were still many lesser, undefended farms and even villages, currently not traced in the archaeological record, although these are suspected for the presumed Slavic-settled zones in inner Istria. In fact, the positions of the so-called 'barbarised necropoleis' near Buzet and Žminj, to cite just the largest ones, are definite proof that those settlements existed. Much therefore remains to be discovered of both the fortified and unfortified Istrian landscape of the Early Middle Ages.

Acknowledgements

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19

Castles on the Water? Defences in Venice and Comacchio during the Early Middle Ages

Sauro Gelichi

Aquis pro muro munitur ('Defended by the waters as if by a wall')
Giovan Battista Cipelli detto 'L'Egnazio', *c.* 1478–1533[1]

Fortified Lagoons?

To defend oneself is not necessarily equivalent to fortifying oneself. Etymologically speaking, to defend (oneself) means 'to keep someone distant', while to fortify is equivalent to 'making stronger, more stable or more resistant'. Of course, being fortified means that one is also able to defend oneself better, but defence is possible even in the absence of built fortifications.

Lagoons are special spaces. They are the 'empty spaces' of the mainland (the word 'lagoon' comes from the Latin *lacuna*), of varying environmental/geophysical character; they are spaces that, over time, have been exploited and inhabited by man and have thus constituted places that were presumably necessary to protect for their resources or for the people living/working there. But to defend a lagoon does not necessarily imply its fortification (even though this may well have occurred).

Starting from these presuppositions, I asked myself whether the repeated references in the traditional historiography to the presence of castles and fortifications in two of the most important lagoons of

northern Italy during the Early Middle Ages, those of Venice and of Comacchio (Fig. 19.1), were based on real facts and structures or whether they are the product of errors or misrepresentations, such as in the interpretation of written sources. Furthermore, since it was certainly necessary to defend a lagoon (or to defend oneself within the lagoon), I also asked myself whether the building of walls and castles was necessary for this (as the ambiguous written sources seem to indicate) or whether other 'systems' or provisions, perhaps simpler, were relied upon that were more efficacious yet distinct. This paper explores what we are told, what we can trace and what we cannot see of these lagoonal 'defences'.

Natural Defence/Artificial Defence: The Venetian Lagoon and the *castra*

'Venice was a city whose walls were saltwater' wrote Crouzet-Pavan (1999, 31–32), referring to an important *topos* of the *Descriptions* and the *Itineraries* of the Modern Age (Calabi 2003, 7), themselves taken from the documents produced by the *Savi alle Acque* (the Magistrates of the Waters). Indeed, Egnazio, a 16th-century humanist, wrote that the city of Venice was defended, since it was 'founded in the water, surrounded by water, as if these waters were a wall' ('*Venetorum urbs/ …./in aquis fondata/ aquarum ambitu circumsepta/aquis pro muro munitur*') (cited by Tiepolo 1983, 17, n. 4).

Certainly, navigating within the lagoon has always been problematic. Anyone wanting to access the various inhabited islands, which constituted the irregular-shaped archipelago since at least Late Antiquity, would have had to overcome the immense problems posed by the shallow waters, the innumerable shoals and the limited landmarks (Marzo 2012). These difficulties did not lessen with time, and it was particularly challenging if one actually wanted to reach the archipelago that was to become a city from the 9th century AD onwards: the *civitas aput Rivoaltum* – 'the city at Rivoalto' (Gelichi 2015). In addition, one can draw upon the long-held myth of the lagoon as a natural refuge and shelter for large numbers of people displaced from mainland Italy in face of barbarian invasions, notably that of Attila in the mid-5th century – an image portrayed early on by John the Deacon (Giovanni diacono), the probable author of the

Istoria Veneticorum and the *Origo civitatum Italiae seu venetiarum. Chronicon altinate et Chronicon gradense*. Whether these incursions and this flight of refugees first prompted the colonisation of the lagoon between the 5th and 6th centuries AD is, however, a different issue (La Rocca 1994; Gelichi 2006).

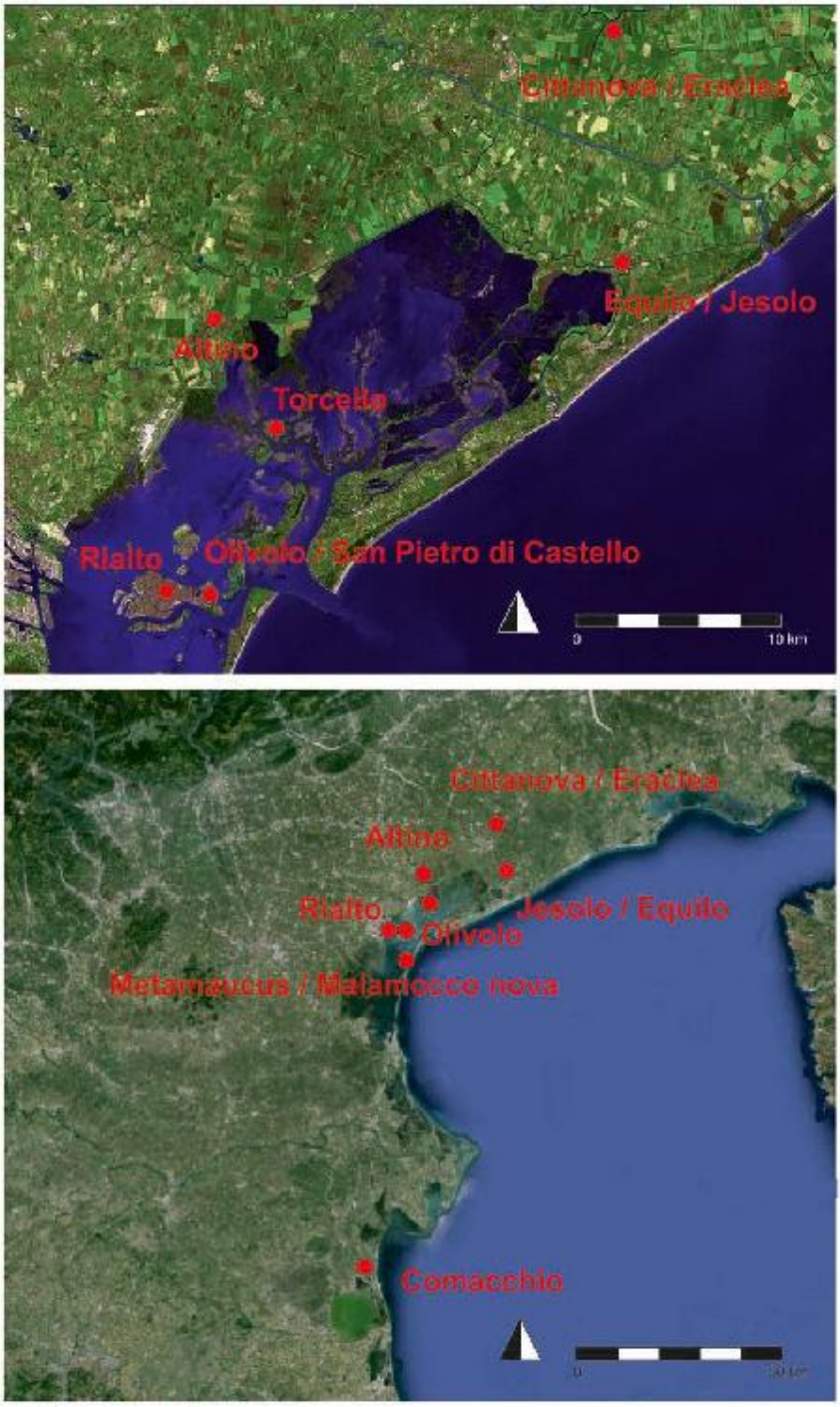

Figure 19.1. Location of the Venice lagoon and Comacchio, in particular, Venice, Olivolo and Rivoalto (Image by University of Ca' Foscari, Venice).

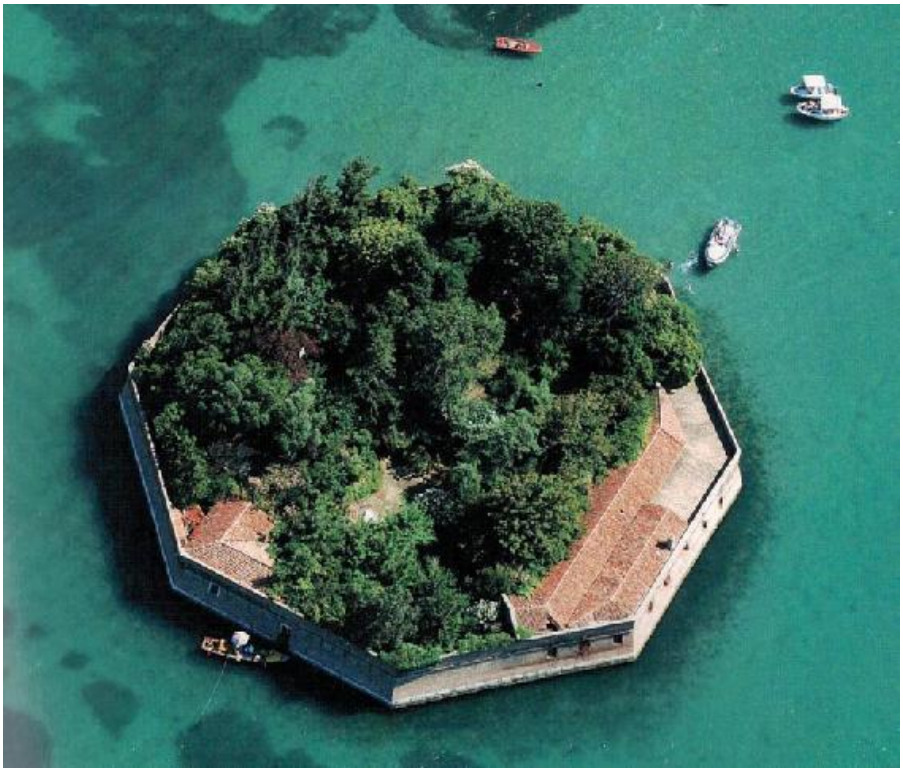

Figure 19.2. Aerial view of the Austrian fortification 'Ottagono Alberoni' in the Venice lagoon (Image from Colamussi and Tozzo Netti, 2007, 27).

In light of these presuppositions, it is not surprising that very few fortifications have been documented in the Venetian Lagoon, at least up until the modern era (Concina 1995), even though the Serenissima (Venice) revived (or reinforced) a defensive project for its boundaries from the late 13th century, in the wake of a changed politico-military situation. This project comprised the articulation of a well-structured system of fortifications (towers or small castles), defending the main points of access into the lagoon's navigable canals or, rather, protecting/overseeing the net of inhabited areas located along the edge of the lagoon. This system saw progressive expansion, starting from the early 16th century; hence, at the fall of the Republic in 1797, the lagoon was almost completely enclosed by a series of fortifications on artificial islets. It was further reinforced under Austrian and French dominations (Moro 2001) and inherited by the Italian Army in the 19th century. Thus, anyone who crosses the lagoon today may well chance upon the remains of these imposing fortifications (many adapted over time to sustain the fire of new artillery); and the natural

impression may arise of a decidedly, and perhaps long-fortified lagoon (Fig. 19.2).

However, in more than one circumstance, the historiography (and not only the local one) speaks about the existence of a series of fortifications and castles built at various moments in the lagoon's history, and especially during the Early Middle Ages. In some cases, castles or fortresses were directly cited from written sources; or in other cases, their presence was hypothesised on the basis of toponymic approaches or simply on the principle of plausibility. It is useful to address this subject in order to bring clarity – as far as is possible – to the issue. Indeed, the concept of a fortified lagoon is a *topos* that has been hard to extinguish, despite the weakness of many of the hypotheses, as will be seen. This *topos* has entered directly into that kind of 'basic history' of the lagoon that poorly researched archaeology (sadly true for the lagoon until very recently) has tended to call upon and use to explain the findings discovered (and not vice versa). In this way, a form of circular reasoning has been produced that seems to contain everything, including castles rising up out of treacherous waters.

In sum, three categories of castle or fortified structures are postulated in the Venetian Lagoon: (i) those sites based on toponymic traces; (ii) those attested through seemingly explicit citations in the written sources; and (iii) those hypothesised on the basis of 'historical plausibility' (i.e. a fortification should be in a certain place). Below we explore and debate each of these postulated types.

An example of the first category, where the place name signifies or supports a form of fortification, coincides today with a district of Venice. The existence of a castle in this area, specifically on the island of Olivolo (which became the bishop's seat in *c*. AD 750: *Istoria Veneticorum* II, 19; Cessi 1963, 119, n 3) is purely based on the place name *Castello*. Traces of a large wall were identified in the 19th century on the *isola delle Vergini* ('island of virgins'), but it is not clear if this was related to a fortification (Casoni 1856). The castle toponym, however, may not pre-date the 11th century. When John the Deacon spoke about the episcopal seat he always referred to it as Olivolo (*e.g. Istoria Veneticorum* II, 21, 24, 44). Indeed, in his time (the very start of the 11th century), the castle toponym was associated with a canal: thus in a passage about the walls of Venice he wrote '*a*

capite rivuli de Castello' ('rivolo' = small waterway) (III, 39) (see below). The first use of Castello not associated with a canal is found in a document dated 1034: *de rivo de Geminies qui discorruit ad Castellum* (see Cessi 1965, 132, n. 1: the waterway in question is that of San Francesco de la Vigna, then *de Arsenatu*: Dorigo 2003, 28, 675). After AD 1050, the bishops of Olivolo were called 'di castello' (or 'castellani') (Cessi 1965, 132). What then are the origins of this toponym? Some scholars link it with the city walls (these being the castle walls); others connect it to the Byzantine fortification that perhaps existed in Rivoalto before the establishment of the Ducal Palace (Dorigo 1983, 534–545; but see below on the palace/*castrum*). Yet excavations on the island of Olivolo, near the location of the episcopal seat (Tuzzato 1991 and 1994; Tuzzato *et al.* 1993) have revealed no trace of any defensive structure. It remains obscure why local written traces and the castle toponym itself reference a possible fortification such a long time after it would have been functional.

However, if we place the documentary references to the toponym in chronological order, we observe a transition from a small waterway (*rivulus de Castello*: start of 11th century) to place ('castello': 1034) and then to the episcopal seat (second half of the 11th century). Furthermore, the toponym *castellum* had many meanings in this period – for example, relating to the presence of antique ruins within a city (Settia 1997, 818, 827, 830; Gelichi 1998). One could also observe that in Byzantine Greece the verb καστελλόω could mean 'to furnish with a battlement top or tops, like a ship of war' (*Greek Lexicon*, *sub voce*, 632); moreover, the contemporary word καστελλάτος meant 'a castellated ship of war' – from which the Latin term *navi castellate* originates, signifying heavily fortified ships with 'castle-like timber towers' at both bow and stern – and such vessels were perhaps in use in Venice during the 9th century (Ray Martin 2001, 173, 282–285, 404, 448).

Just as the term κάστελλος (from the Latin *castellum*) is a polysemic word, so too is the term κάστρον (from the Latin *castrum*) (Lazzari 2009, 630–635). In particular, from the 6th century onwards, in the Byzantine-controlled areas of Venice and Ravenna (and southern Italy), *castrum* also seems to have assumed 'an ambiguous meaning that is not observed elsewhere' (ibid., 635). Analysis of John the Deacon's *Istoria Veneticorum* has already underlined the 'casual'

use of this term to indicate places that were of institutional and structural equivalence (Gelichi 2007, 83–84, fig. 5). Establishing the ratio of this usage to other meanings of the word is difficult, since this ratio likely changes even within the work itself according to the narrative circumstances and, most probably, the sources from which John drew his information (cf. Berto 2001, 208–232). This issue is important, if primarily to highlight the insidious danger associated with translating it in its most common form in medieval Latin, i.e. castle. This observation should apply to other works that have heavily influenced the construction of the legend of Venice's origins, including the *Origo*. However, a translation 'to the letter' represents the most popular option taken, thereby generating towers and castles to populate the lagoon's early medieval (and Byzantine) landscape.

This militarised representation of the lagoon appears confirmed by another source, namely a 10th-century text, written in Constantinople: the *De Administrando Imperio* of the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus composed between 948 and 952. In this text (*De Administrando Imperio*, 27/90–95), settlements like Murano, but also Venice itself (better referred to as '*civitas aput Rivoaltum'*), are defined as κάστρα (but with Torcello an exception, being called εμπόριον μέγα or 'grand emporium'), as well as other localities less easily identifiable (Cessi 1963). However, once again, the trap is even more evident. As noted, κάστρον in Byzantine sources can assume various meanings: a military stronghold; a settlement protected by a wall, equipped, or not, with jurisdiction on the surrounding territory; a territory or district (Lazzari 2009, 631, 642). In essence, it seems that the word continues to lose its military connotation, and to assume instead a more generic value as 'settlement', whose specific meaning needs to be researched according to the context in which it is used. For example, Paul Arthur sustains that the κάστρα of Byzantine date in rural areas can be likened to those settlements that geographers call agro-towns and that archaeologists call small towns (Arthur 2006: 28) – in other words nuclear settlements that possess a sufficient agricultural workforce and in which a series of services are present to support, for example, a market town. Finally, in other contexts, still within a Byzantine orbit, κάστρον is the equivalent of 'town' (von Falkenhausen 1978; Palmieri 1996, 57; and translated thus for the *De administrando Imperio* in the passages related to Venice). In substance,

between the 6th–10th centuries, at least in Greek sources, any settlement could be defined as κάστρον or *civitas* (Lazzari 2009, 633).

Inevitably, this discussion requires us to reconsider the concept of 'town' in the Early Middle Ages, especially when ancient vocabulary was in use (not without its difficulties) to describe new realities. This also makes defining what constituted a town between the 6th and 10th centuries problematic; after all there are issues in attempting to apply a basic hierarchy of terms to material realities, which the archaeologists should instead construct and classify themselves (and not vice versa).

From the above reflections, we can propose that the interpretation of those written sources relative to the lagoon, whether in Greek or Latin, of an essentially narrative or geographic-descriptive character (from 10th century onwards) are in reality of limited use for reconstructing the material reality of the structures that would form the settlement in the Venetian Lagoon. On this basis, Cessi, drawing on a particular passage by John the Deacon (*Istoria Veneticorum* I, 5), argued that the lagoon zone witnessed something that could be likened to the phenomenon nowadays defined as *'incastellamento'* – a formation of castle sites (Cessi 1963, 107–108). This hypothesis has been rightly rejected (Castagnetti 1992), but not to the point of wholly abandoning the idea of castles here (in essence, he rejects the idea of defended sites promoted by the nobility of the time, not the existence of military castles). This does not exclude some form of fortification existing in the lagoon, but it does mean that the written sources will not prove this. Instead, it is essential to look to archaeology to verify where castles are claimed/postulated. We can begin with the famous example of San Lorenzo Ammiana.

The 1980s and 1991 excavations (Fersuoch *et al.* 1989; Brogiolo 1996) on what remains of the island of San Lorenzo di Ammiana, located in the northern lagoon, identified traces of a fortification in the settlement sequence, identified as the Byzantine fort of '*Castratium*', which was built over a former church dedicated to San Lorenzo (Brogiolo 1996, 44; and, more recently, with new irrelevant hypotheses, see Canal 2013, 366–406). This interpretation sees a fortress built on the most central of the islands forming the Ammiana archipelago, in the context 'of a greater defence organisation along the lagoons of the Upper Adriatic' (Fersuoch *et al.* 1989, 93–94). But

reappraisal of earlier research (Moine 2011) plus further fieldwork conducted during recent excavation activities (Gelichi and Moine 2012) have revised the settlement sequence on the island. This starts approximately in the 4th century AD with a building possibly of commercial scope (*e.g.* a warehouse) and likely of discontinuous use. From the 7th century, after some funerary activity, the space fell out of use and here and elsewhere on the island no new occupation levels prior to the 10th century are known. Re-examination of some of the supposed material evidence of a Byzantine military stronghold (Fig. 19.3), primarily comprising wall structures of different typologies, indicates much later dates and thus severely weakens the hypothesis of a Byzantine base (Moine 2011, 82–86; Gelichi and Moine 2012, 42–43). Thus, no Byzantine castle can be sited on this isolated patch of ground; instead, only traces of discontinuous and functionally diverse occupancy are evident, which are easier to explain considering the complex population dynamics of the northern lagoon than relying decidedly misleading written sources.

The last aspect to examine here relates to fortifications hypothesised on the basis of the principle of plausibility. Some scholars propose that such fortifications (Byzantine, if not even Roman: Dorigo 1983) would have been reused by the noble family of the *Partecipazi* at the transfer of the seat of Duchy to Rivoalto, around AD 800 (*Istoria Veneticorum* II, 29). The site of the original palace is much debated: in the 19th century, the remains of masonry structures were uncovered that were attributed to a primitive structure of the 9th century (Gallo 1889) (Fig. 19.4) – a date simplistically linked to the written sources and one certainly needing modern archaeological verification. The historical-narrative sources provide very little information on the ducal complex palace: John the Deacon says that it was the only building that could be defined as a *palatium*; we might assume that it was a protected and defended structure (Berto 2001, 200–201, 204). One detail comes in relation to a secret visit made by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III to Venice, during which Otto lodged in this palace with two members of his entourage in its east tower (*Istoria Veneticorum* IV, 57). There is reason to question the words of the chronicler in this case. The *palatium* was clearly stone- (or brick-) built, equipped with defensive structures (*e.g.* towers) that would have given it prominence and protection; this protection was seemingly

geared more against Venetians and not against foreign enemies, as shown in the revolt against Pietro IV (*Veneticorum* IV, 12: *'Palatium tamen, qui a bellicosi licet paucis militibus illu stipatum noverant, nulla ratione usi sunt* [i.e. the Venetians] *penetrare'* – '[The Venetians], however, did not dare to enter the palace at all, since they knew it was protected by few but fearsome soldiers'). These Venetians contrived a cunning plan: they set fire to some (presumably wooden) houses in front of the palace and on the other side of the canal, hoping that the flames would become high enough to reach the palace and set it alight (the actions in fact caused damage to many churches in the vicinity and to fully 300 houses). One claim is that this Ducal Palace was built over or within a Byzantine castle; but no sources point to this and just because the ducal palace was fortress-like, does this necessarily mean that it was preceded by a fortification? Could this have been the reason that pushed the Duke to transfer the ducal seat to Rivoalto? In my opinion, they constitute no sound argument: and yet the *castrum*/palace complex has become, even in specialised and informed literature, an accepted 'fact' (Agazzi 1991, 13–17).

Figure 19.3. Plan of San Lorenzo di Ammiana indicating the presumed walls of the castrum (Image by University of Ca' Foscari, Venice).

Defence against the Hungarians: The City Walls of Venice

The only source that speaks of Venice's city wall is John the Deacon, who recounts two specific moments in relation to the city's foundation. The first coincides with the noted transfer of the ducal seat to Rivoalto (810–811) and the construction of the *palatium* (*Istoria Veneticorum* II, 29); the second dates to the time of Duke Pietro Tribuno (–911) (III, 39), to whom the text explicitly attributes building works ('*edificare cepit*') – and it is only here in the *Istoria* that John refers to the settlement as a *civitas* ('*civitas aput rivoaltum*') (Cessi 1963, 305). This building activity was a collective effort, by Pietro Tribuno with his subjects ('*cum suis*') and involved construction of a wall stretching from the canal located near a place named 'the Castle' ('*a capite rivuli de Castello*': see above) as far as the church of S. Maria di Zobenigo ('*Predicte vero civitatis murus a capite rivuli de Castello usque ad ecclesiam sanctę Marię, que de Iubiniaco dicitur, estendebatur*' – 'That city wall runs from the side of the Castle canal up to the church of Holy Mary which is also called Iubiniaco'). In addition, an extremely large iron chain was placed across the canal at S. Maria di Zobenigo, attached at one end to the outer face of the city walls and, at the other, to the side of the church of S. Gregorio.

Various hypotheses exist regarding the wall's course, summarised in Figure 19.5, but we must immediately stress that no material evidence of this exists, despite the various 'archaeological objects' accredited to it over the years (such as the wall discovered in 1822 near Olivolo: Casoni 1856, 209–234). Thus, we only know about its basic arrangement – one that, frankly, raises doubts about its capacity to defend, especially against any sizeable and concerted assault. We can cite John the Deacon's reference to one main episode, namely the pillaging by the Hungarians and their (failed) attempt to enter Malamocco and Rivoalto (*Istoria Veneticorum* III, 37), curtly stating that the Hungarians, after destroying various settlements around the lagoon, such as Equilo, Chioggia and Cittanova, were repulsed by Duke Peter with ships.

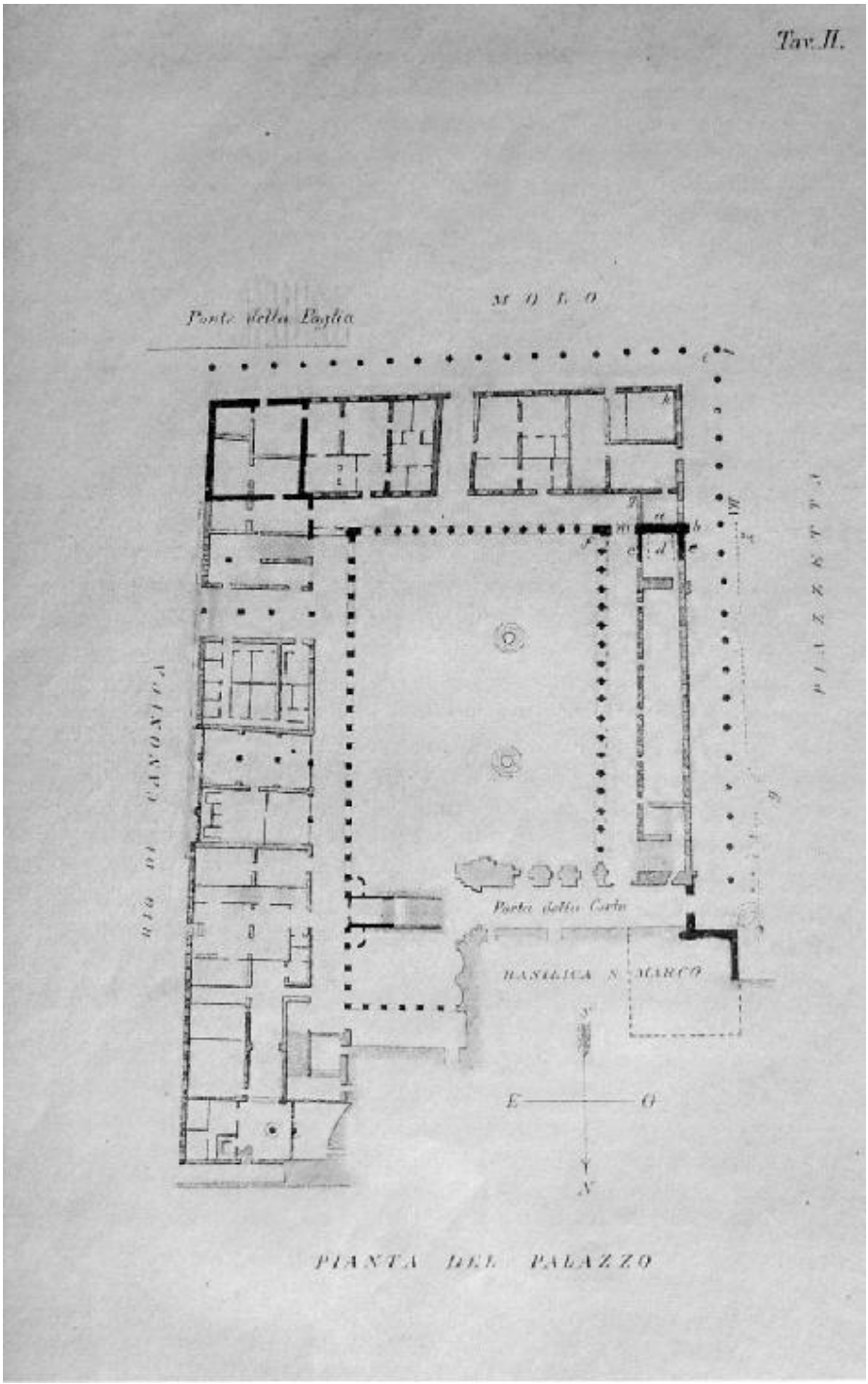

Figure 19.4. Ducal Palace, Venice: possible wall structures (shown in black) of the early medieval palace (Image by Gallo 1889).

We might observe that the wall and the iron chain along the *Canal*

Grande represent a brazen reference to the Constantinopolitan model (Djurić 1995, 195) and accordingly appear more strongly impregnated with ideology than forming an efficient fortification system to the growing city. Interestingly, John the Deacon seems to suggest that a city/*civitas* only comes into being when it has city walls. At this point, their existence and their actual extension become facts of secondary importance. They are significant because, together with other episodes, such as the theft of the relics of Saint Mark in Alexandria in 828, under Giustiniano Particiaco (*Istoria Veneticorum* II, 39), their function was to affirm and confirm a new status, namely in making this place a city, one far more prominent than a 'normal' city.

Defence against Enemies: Palisades and the Fleet

Moving back in time, the turbulent early 9th century is marked by (vain) efforts by the Carolingian Franks under King Pepin the Short to overthrow the Venetians and to conquer the islands of the lagoon (Cessi 1963, 150–151). These events are described in various sources but rarely in any detail, with the sources more concerned with outlining the political and institutional scenarios within which the conflict transpired, rather than describing battles. In this regard, the cited *De Administrando Imperio* offers a more valuable guide to the episode. The entire sequence of events is, for obvious reasons, centred on Malamocco and on the southern lagoon (note that the events preceded the ducal transfer to Rivoalto by a few years). In this text, the desire to stress the tight bond between the Byzantine Empire and the Venetians is clear – King Pepin asked the Venetians to surrender because he claimed that they were on his land, but the Venetians responded by saying that they were subjects of the emperor (*De Administrando Imperio* 28). Prior to this exchange, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus recounts that King Pepin and his army had stopped on the mainland at a place called Ἀειβόλας, at the point of passage (a canal?) towards the islands. When the Venetians became aware of their presence and of preparations to steer a ship loaded with cavalry towards the island of Metamauco (an island relatively close to the mainland and, at that time, the seat of the duke), they took countermeasures: they built palisades (staked-walls) and defences along the entire passage ('βαλόντες κερατάρια, άπαν το πέραμα εναπέφραξαν'), thereby forcing the Carolingians to remain where

they were for a good six months (since there was no other place from which they could transfer), with skirmishes taking place almost daily. In fact, the Venetians took up position in warships behind the palisades closing the access, and from here shot arrows and launched javelins against the enemy ('μετά τοξείας καί ριπταρίων').

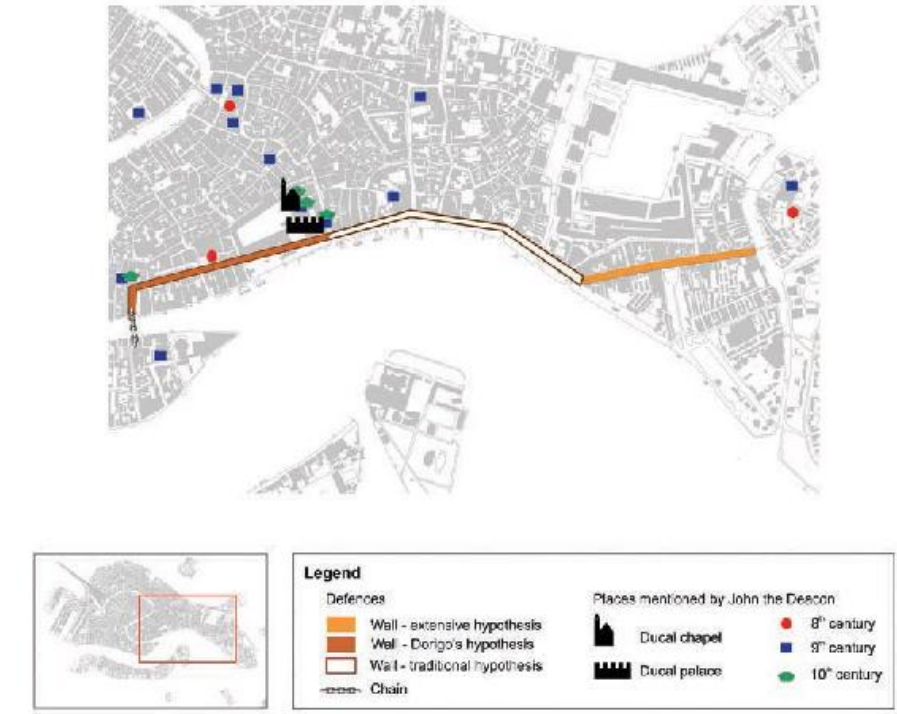

Figure 19.5. Map indicating the line of Venice's hypothetical city walls (Image by University of Ca' Foscari, Venice).

Figure 19.6. Vision of Comacchio during the Early Middle Ages (Image by University of

Ca' Foscari, Venice and Riccardo Merlo).

In substance, the Venetian defensive measures comprised temporary palisades blocking water-borne access into the lagoon from the mainland (confirming that the lagoon could only be navigated using defined canals) and the arming of ships. No permanent fortification was evident prior to this; rather, fairly limited measures could be installed at short notice to hold off even a well-equipped army like that of King Pepin.

An efficient fleet clearly could pay high dividends for the Venetians, not just in terms of defending their lagoon and settlements, but more widely in securing their economic interests in the Adriatic and, increasingly, in the Mediterranean. During the course of the 9th century – as Rivoalto became the seat of power and Venice gained economic and political sway – references to the fleet and its functions become increasingly frequent in historical-narrative sources (in particular, the *Istoria Veneticorum*). Not only did the fleet play a decisive role in defeating neighbouring enemies (such as the Comacchians; see below) and those further afield, but it also assumed a political role, since the fleet helped ensure that the Venetians would become an active player on the complex chessboard of alliances. One notable example relates to the appeal made in Venice in 840 by Theodosios Baboutzikos, an ambassador of the Byzantine Emperor Theophilos, who was on a diplomatic mission in the West to seek help for the Empire against the Arabs (*Istoria Veneticorum* II, 50 – in the event a disastrous war). Theodosios requested, and obtained, from Duke Pietro Tradonico, 60 warships to help to raise the Saracen siege of Taranto. Thus, even at this relatively early stage Venice's fleet was perceived as a powerful military vehicle, and one adapting to innovations emerging in the Byzantine world (Pryor and Jeffreys 2006): another episode in the time of Duke Pietro Tradonico relates the construction of two large warships (in Greek, *zelandriae)*, defined by John the Deacon as '*bellicosas*', the likes of which had never been seen before (*Istoria Veneticorum* II, 55). One possibility is that the Byzantine ambassador Theodosios contributed to this – perhaps he had a blueprint or had brought one such vessel with him (Shepard 1995, 55–60); the idea is strengthened if we identify the Theodosios used by the emperor with the Theodosius associated with three lead seals found in northern Europe, who is defined as *Chartoularios tou*

Bestiariou, i.e. an individual with specific knowledge of warships (Shepard and Cheynet 2014, 88–89).

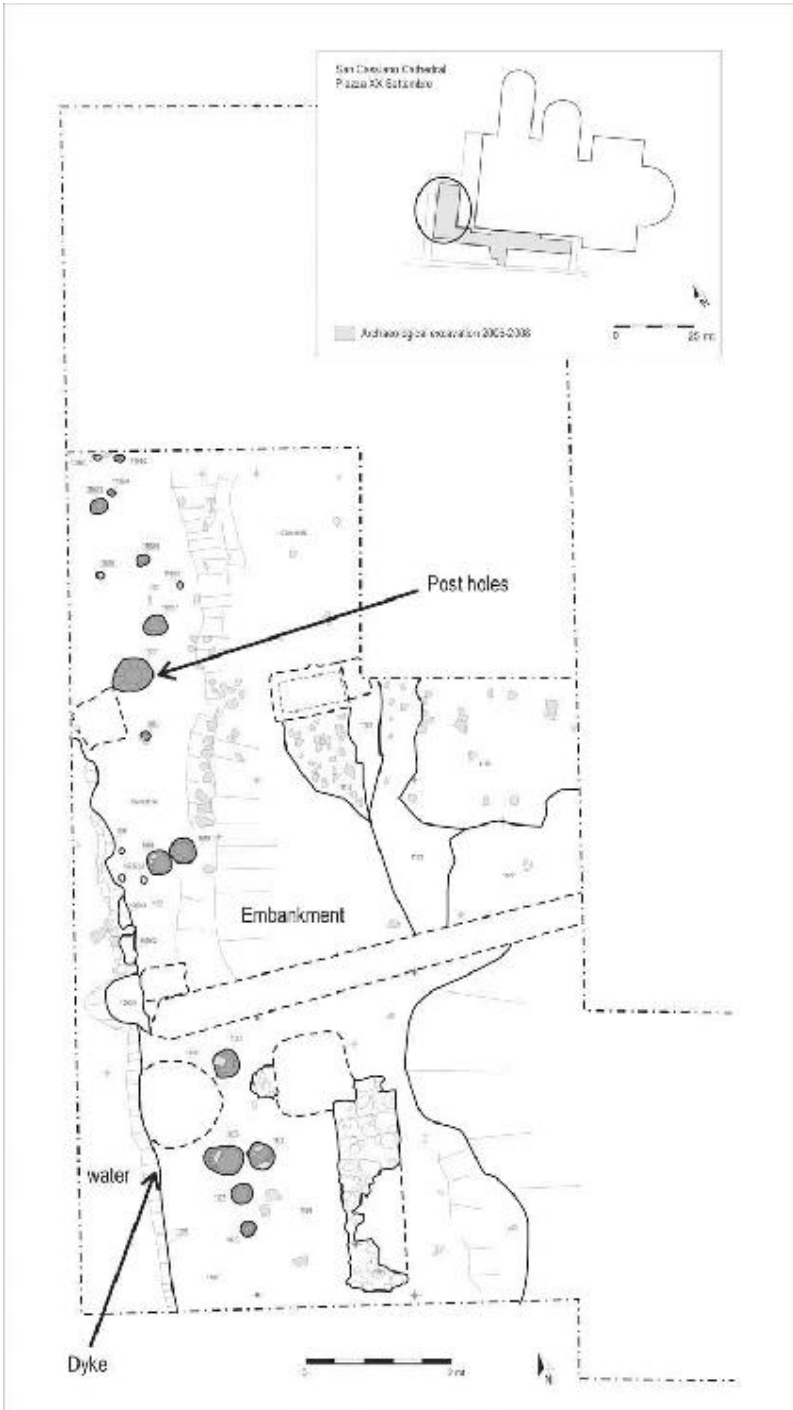

Figure 19.7. Archaeological plan showing the phases and the castrum at Comacchio.

(Image by University of Ca' Foscari, Venice).

Defence against the Venetians: the *castrum Comiacli*

According to written sources, Comacchio was besieged, damaged or even destroyed, on more than one occasion: by Saracens in 875 (*Istoria Veneticorum* III, 12), by Byzantines in 808/809 (when, during the conflict between the Franks and Byzantines, a fleet vainly attacked the settlement – see Cessi 1963, 151), and by the Venetians in both 881 (*Istoria Veneticorum* III, 28) and 932 (this a seemingly definitive action: *Istoria Veneticorum* III, 44). Although labelled by the written sources as a *castrum*, Comacchio's defences rarely appear effective. In fact, one might legitimately suspect that these biased sources stressed the victories of the Venetians and emphasised the defeats of the Comacchians. Nevertheless, most scholars interpret the appellation *castrum* (= castle) to the letter, and so include Comacchio in the group of Byzantine fortresses built in response to Lombard aggression under King Agilulf in the early 7th century. Since finds have also been discovered in and around Comacchio dating to the Ostrogothic period (earlier 6th century), one might postulate a fortification established in the context of the Gothic-Byzantine Wars of the 530s–540s (Patitucci Uggeri 1989).

But what fortifications characterised early medieval Comacchio? A new era in archaeological research here (since 2004) has led to a clearer definition of the site and context of Comacchio and the characterisation of the key elements of its chronological sequence (Gelichi *et al.* 2012). The picture is far from complete, but some data seem clear: the settlement did not develop before the end of the 6th century but underwent significant, accelerated growth in the 7th century, centred on trade and artisanal activities. In the early 8th century, Comacchio even became an episcopal seat (Gelichi 2013); perhaps in this phase the settlement and its community saw an economic peak. Tensions with the Venetians were yet to emerge and a privileged rapport with the Lombard Kingdom made Comacchio, almost a free port, the first great emporium of the Italian Early Middle Ages (Gelichi *et al.* 2012). The situation started to change from the earliest 9th century when, as seen, Venetian power had been consolidated both physically and politically, and Venice had emerged, in a changed politico-economic international context, as more suited

for the needs of the Carolingian market than the small town of Comacchio at the mouth of the Po (Gelichi 2008). Perhaps inevitably, this century sees the first attacks upon Comacchio (see below).

For Comacchio, the idea of a fortification (or a series of fortifications) is not very plausible considering the town's configuration and location (Fig. 19.6). Even if the extent of the lagoon has perhaps been slightly overestimated in a recent reconstruction (Rucco 2015; in press), Comacchio as a settlement based on small islands separated by canals, like Rivoalto, remains an unlikely hypothesis. As yet, no secure remains of structures that could be attributed to urban fortification works have been found. However, recent excavations around the present cathedral (Gelichi 2009) traced a series of robust upright wooden poles (30–50 cm in diameter) in association with a series of smaller poles (dating to Period 5, phase 2: Grandi, in press) (Fig. 19.7), close to a structure interpreted as a canal bank (and thus a boundary element to the small island upon which the episcopal seat would be built). Since the timbers seem more substantial than would have been required simply to act as a perimeter to the area, hence a potential defensive function is suspected, designed to reinforce the natural defences of the archipelago. Their dating to the 10th century would in fact fit a period when there was a need to protect the institutional centre, i.e. the episcopal area, rather than the whole town; this was a time when Comacchio faced, according to textual sources, continual external pressures (For defences at other, mainland episcopal seats in this era, see Brogiolo and Gelichi 1998, 72–73).

Comacchio indeed became a threatened and increasingly isolated site. It was attacked in 809 by a Byzantine fleet, albeit without success (*Annales Francorum*); another assault, a joint Venetian and Byzantine venture came in the last quarter of the 9th century under Duke John (Giovanni diacono III, 28) and slightly earlier, there is reference to a sack of Comacchio by Saracen raiders during the dukedom of padre Orso (III 12). The decisive attack came under Pietro II Candiano (duke/doge from AD 931) (Giovanni diacono III, 44).

Conclusions: Lagoons and Defences

The case studies analysed above are certainly not the only examples of fortified lagoons, even in northern Italy (for example, other interesting

instances of *castra* in lagoons include Grado and Caorle), but they constitute two exemplary cases for considering the issue from a more general viewpoint. What are the key observations we can draw from this our analysis of texts and archaeology?

The first observation is that the erection of fortifications in the lagoon was not necessary. This does not mean that it did not happen, but rather that it was a decision that was neither useful nor (above all) economical. If the function of a fortification is to keep enemies at bay, this could be achieved in the lagoon through other, more efficient means. In this regard, the case of Venice is a classic example. In one of the rare explicit references by an early medieval source to defences implemented by the Venetians, these comprised the installation of temporary structures and the engagement of an armed fleet. The act of closing a passage was sufficient to counter the threat of raids (analogous is the sinking of five ships by the Danes at the entrance to the fjord at Roskilde in the 11th century: Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen 1978). Thus, guarding or closing access routes and not the fortifying of the settled islands themselves seems to have met the needs of the inhabitants of Rivoalto and others before them. And quite probably the Venetians used comparable tactics against the Hungarians, as and when were needed.

But these measures presuppose the presence and development of an efficient and well-equipped military fleet, which could combine both defensive and offensive operations. It is not by chance that the Venetians paid great attention to ship construction and that already in the 9th century Venice was, in the eyes of the Byzantine emperors, the prime source for requesting the assistance of a sizeable and well equipped flotilla. Equally noticeable is the clear reference to the construction of new '*bellicosas*' ships, indicating that in this era Venice was busily investing in new boat designs to aid her growing mastery of the sea.

Secondly, the existence of city walls, of which only John the Deacon speaks, is improbable and a likely invention of the chronicler; at best, there may have been some walls of demarcation, but not a solid and continuous military circuit.

Thus, after considering the available evidence, we should feel rather disturbed about the 'created idea' of a lagoon fortified with towers and castles – one gathered up, often incautiously, from the

historical-narrative sources, from which has also come a desire to push this defensive landscape further into the past, to the Roman era. This can easily be compared to the *topos* regarding the flight of displaced inhabitants from the mainland to the islands of the lagoon in fear of assaults by the barbarians (whether Huns or Lombards): such folk fled to the islands, remained 'Byzantine' and defended themselves with *castra*, analogous to what prevailed on the mainland under very different conditions (yet in a context that often, even here, leaves room for misinterpretations). As seen, thus far, the archaeological evidence, when not interpreted on the basis of written sources, has yielded no good traces of such fortifications. And if no future proof is forthcoming, then I believe that we should abandon this idea of an early fortified lagoon forever.

The situation for Comacchio is relatively similar, although the environmental context is not identical and the dimensions involved are different. However, once again, the discrepancy between the vocabulary of the written and the archaeological sources is just as clear. Only in the 10th-century phases is it possible to trace something that could be equated, tentatively, to a fortification – but wooden and not extensive. But here we are talking about an episode chronologically much later than the traditional dating of *castrum Comiacli* (often set to the 6th century), linked to the protection of well-defined spaces (episcopal) and in any case referable to just one of the many small islands making up the Comacchio archipelago.

Even if Venice's lagoon was not studded with castles and fortifications, in the same way that the town of Comacchio was not a castle in the technical sense of the word, that does not mean that no structures or constructions were ever built in these spaces with pronounced military and, above all, defensive characteristics. As seen, in the Early Middle Ages, routes of access into the Venice lagoon started to be fortified and protected. But it may also have occurred earlier, as appears likely for the ducal *palatium*, a palace undoubtedly built in stone or/and brick, and seemingly well defended and endowed with towers. Here the existence of a palace-fortress/citadel is very plausible: it was a symbol of the duke's power and the hub of authority and was thus an inherently military–civilian focus; it needed to represent, as well as to protect. It was strong enough to defend itself against the citizens – an internal and not an external enemy. The

palace-fortress on Rivoalto, together with the chapel which held the prized relics of San Marco, must necessarily have been distinctive and solid features, magnificent enough to denote, in a town that would remain largely timber-built for a long time to come, the emergence of a major power.

Note

1 An inscription of 1505 now at the Museo Correr di Venezia. Inscribed on black marble with gilded incised letters, set above the offices of the MAGISTRATI ALLE ACQUE IN RIO ALTO MAGISTRATURA ISTITUITA DALLA REPVBBLICA ISOLE VENEXIA NEL 1505.

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20

Walled Towns of the 8th–11th Centuries in Central Italy

Carlo Citter

Introduction

Most towns in early medieval central Italy had walls (Fig. 20.1). However, this does not at all mean that these were built during this period: some towns still had their early Roman walls in fairly good condition, though restored, and, sometimes, even refurbished; some of these may have seen renewal in the late 3rd/early 4th century in the wake of the fortification of Rome under the emperor Aurelian in the 270s AD; and a few may have even become first fortified in that phase. But we do see a phase of new circuits being built and old defences restored during the 5th and 6th centuries AD and these can in many cases be related to reactions to the multiple insecurities of the Gothic-Byzantine Wars (535–553) and the following Lombard invasion and expansion (from AD 569). However, possession of a wall did not mean full protection, as will be seen. Early medieval towns in Italy were islands of settled areas within and outside the Roman or pre-Roman circuit walls. Only a handful of early medieval towns were new foundations and so needed a brand new curtain wall; other sites comprised re-occupied pre-Roman hilltop sites, which might feature still well preserved Etruscan defences which might have required only a few restorations or modifications. Thus, at the start of the 11th century the emergent communal towns inherited a stratified situation, which will be outlined below, drawing on a set of key and

representative case studies. My emphasis will chiefly be on the towns' walls and problems of their dating and their actual relationship with the urban context. Recently, Gian Pietro Brogiolo (2011) has provided a general overview of early medieval towns in the former Western Roman Empire (further useful overviews and series of case studies, though not focused solely on town walls, are Augenti (ed.) 2006 and Christie 2006). The following data and interpretations fit tidily into the scenario delineated by Brogiolo.

The Late Antique Legacy (3rd–6th Centuries AD): A Puzzling Scenario

We must begin with the legacy of Late Antiquity. Scholars have previously debated the fate of early Roman town walls, but relevant data are really scanty, and sometimes questionable. We still discuss too much on what literary sources tell us, than on archaeological data. This is a key issue: we would be better able to evaluate the structure, extent and role of the early medieval urban fortifications if we are able to distinguish what was inherited from the past.

The case of Lucca forms a good starting point (Fig. 20.2). Archaeological data show that its early Roman town walls were restored and reinforced in several areas between the 3rd and 4th century AD. This enterprise should likely coincide with or shortly follow the erection of Rome's new defences. After all, Lucca occupied a crucial position along a highway leading north, which formed also the main crossroads to at least two roads running S–N from Rome to the Alps, and a road running E–W along the Arno valley to coastal Liguria. In addition, Lucca was an official base for weapon/arms production, containing the only *fabrica* of swords for the Western Roman army (Citter 1995). All these facts are sufficient to suggest a reinforced urban fortification. Later on, Lucca faced the siege led by the imperial general Narses during the last phase of the Gothic–Byzantine Wars (AD 553), this city being one of the main and final Gothic strongholds in Tuscany: the episode is reported by the Byzantine historian Agathias (*Hist.*, 1, 11–17) who describes Lucca's walls as fully capable of resisting a three-month siege, being strongly endowed with towers and battlements. In addition, there are even some indications in the extant wall fabric of possible post-siege

restorations (Ciampoltrini 2011, 17). Clearly Lucca's defences were important for its survival and their robustness appears reflected in the fact that only in the 12th century was a new fortification wall initiated to enclose the expanding communal town (Ciampoltrini 2011, 55).

Figure 20.1. Towns mentioned within the text (Image: author).

The same basic sequence occurred in Florence (Fig. 20.3). One should recognise that the Dante's well known *primo cerchio* (first ring) in his *Inferno* referred to the Roman walls of ancient *Florentia*. Recent detailed collation and analysis of urban excavations and finds (Cantini *et al.* 2007; Scampoli 2010) and the generation of a valuable geoportal

(http://florenceonearth.comune.fi.it/index.php) provide urban researchers with an abundant, strong and hugely informative dataset. This material allows us, for instance, to reject the former hypothesis of a Byzantine, reduced circuit wall to the town in the Gothic Wars. Instead, the archaeology points to a late antique and early medieval urban (and suburban) expansion which seems to have led to a dismantling of portions of the first, Augustan-period brick-built walls (Scampoli 2010, 12. Cf. the likely late 4th- or early 5th-century defensive curtain at Pistoia, exploiting much reused material or *spolia*: Cantini and Citter 2010, 423). Subsequently, no substantive defensive alterations occur until the second enclosure of Florence's communal era, built in the late 12th century.

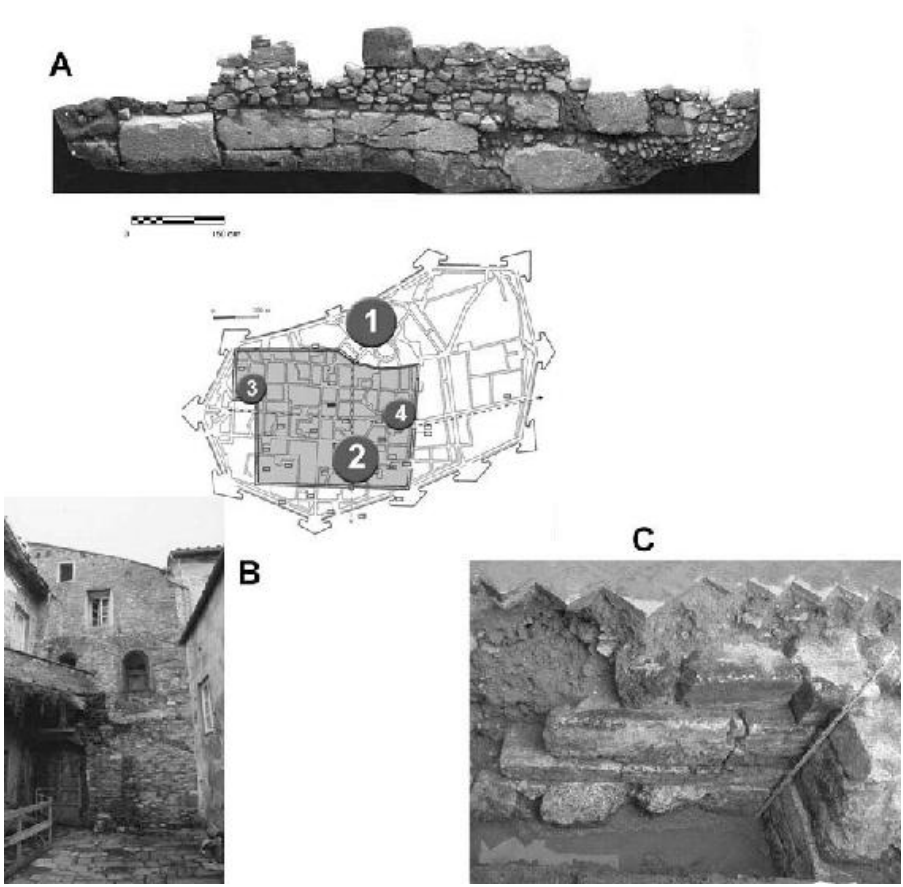

Figure 20.2. The main features of late antique fortifications of Lucca: A) late Republican Roman walls with late antique restorations from the excavations in via delle Conce; B) late antique tower from via S. Girolamo; C) late antique tower from via Guinigi. The main early medieval elements of Lucca are: 1) the suburb of S. Frediano near the amphitheatre;

2) the cathedral area; 3) the Gall-Tassi excavation with traces of the late imperial weapon (swords) fabrica and the Lombard palace of dux Allone; 4) the area of porta SS. Gervasio and Protasio and the rich Lombard grave of S. Giulia (Source: http://segnidellauser.blogspot.it/2009/11/le-mura-di-lucca-testi-smarriti-fra.html).

Evidence from both Lucca and Florence also reveal much about the relationship between the circuit wall and the living town. While we should no longer rely on the old model of inward-shrinking towns, archaeological data now prove without doubt that late antique and early medieval towns resembled more a group of villages in comparison to the townscapes of the early imperial or communal period. There were islands of houses, workshops, marketplaces and churches clustered often close to the gates of the old towns; this image could prevail both within and outside the Roman defensive walls, and indeed, we can recognise 'suburban' foci, such as those gathered around the churches of S. Felicita and S. Lorenzo at Florence, and around S. Frediano at Lucca; best known of course is the district that grew up at the Vatican in Rome centred on St Peter's basilica. Thus, the circuit walls were visible and they played a role as an identity marker, but they should be viewed more as an osmotic tissue between the living places of the town, rather than as a tight boundary or purely as a fortification. This situation persists across the whole span of the Early Middle Ages, no matter whether the town walls were well preserved, ruinous, or restored/renewed. We should also observe that these circuit walls were in many instances extensive, too long to be defended by small groups of soldiers and citizenry.

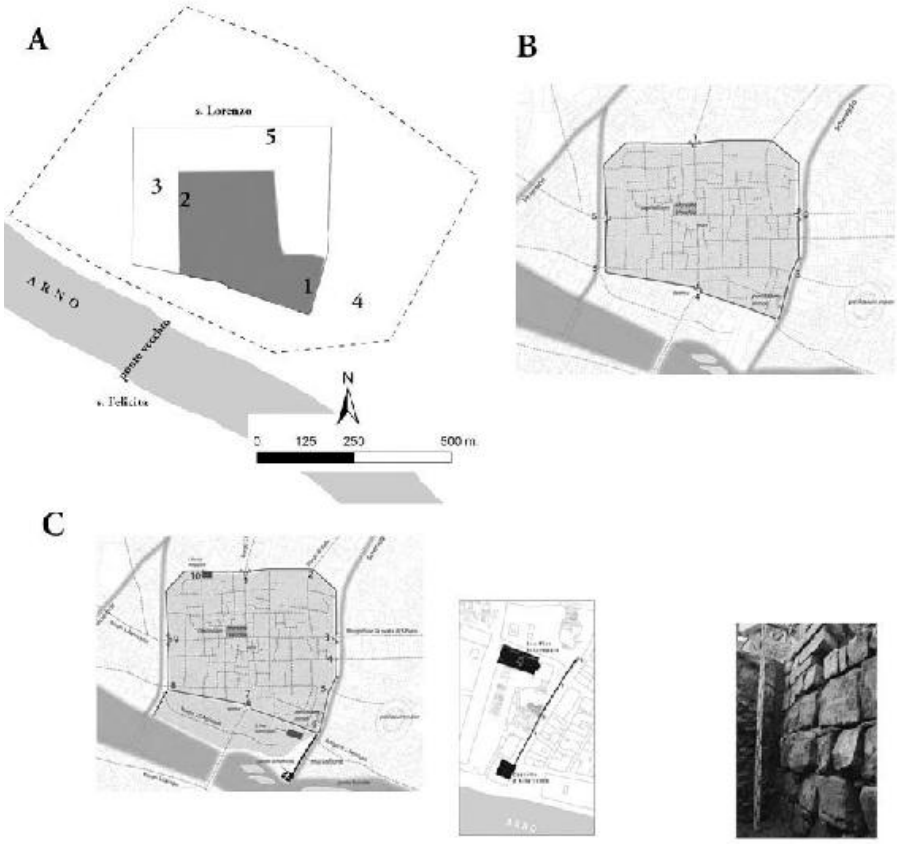

Figure 20.3. Late antique and early medieval Florence: A) the Roman (continuous line) and late antique fortifications (grey area) compared to the 12th-century new walls (dotted line). Main features: 1 - theatre, 2 - Capitolium, 3 - forum, 4 - amphitheatre, 5 - S. Reparata episcopal church; B) the Carolingian walls (Source: Vannini and Scampoli 2015, 266, fig. 7); C) the restorations and implementations undergone during the 11th century (Sources: Vannini and Scampoli 2015, 268, fig. 11 and Scampoli 2010, 235, fig. 101).

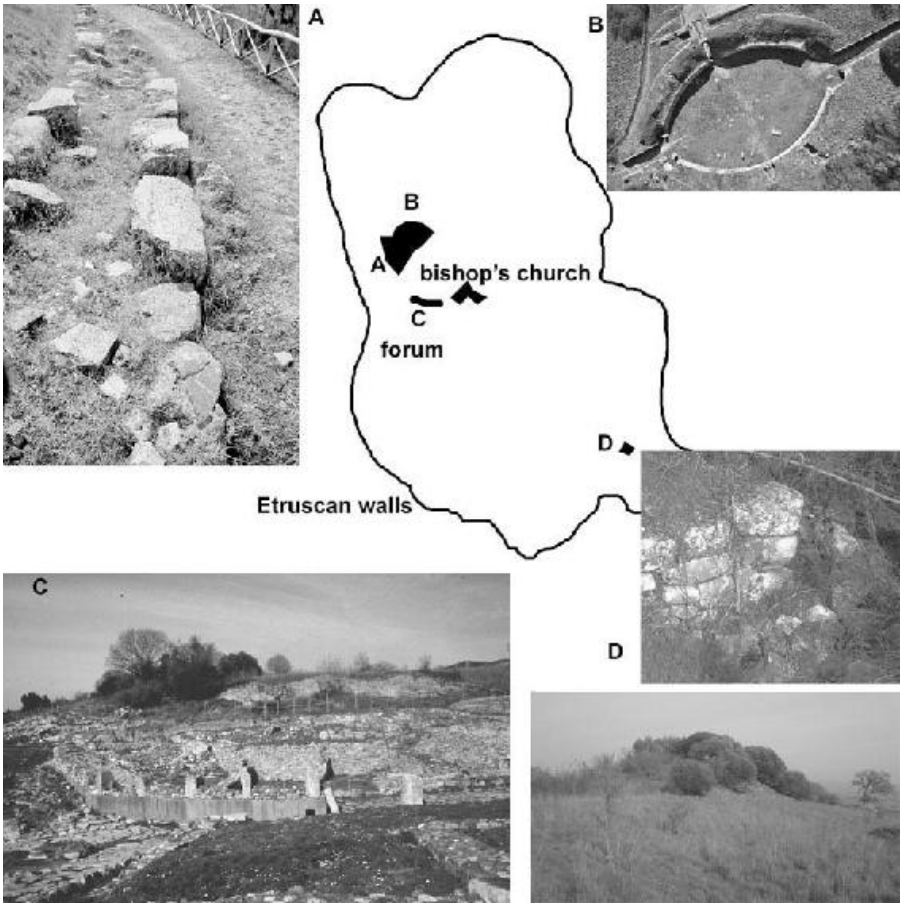

Figure 20.4. Late antique and early medieval Roselle: A) the late antique or early medieval walls starting from the amphitheatre; B) the amphitheatre; C) the so-called opus africanum; D) the 11th moat (Images: archive Museo Archeologico e d'Arte della Maremma).

Not every town in central Italy behaved in this fashion, however. These are cases of towns that simply faded or even disappeared, at least as major population centres, as evident for the ancient Etruscan towns of Vulci and Tarquinia, which remained as only minor settlements for the whole Middle Ages. It is not by chance that we lack indications at these sites of fortification works after the earlier Roman period. The best documented case is Cosa (Fentress 2003; Cirelli and Fentress 2012), still mentioned as a town in the 3rd century, but reduced to two small enclosures (a *castrum* and a village) by the early 6th.

Other case studies are less clear, due to infrequent and old excavations. First we can mention *Rusellae* in southern Tuscany (Fig.

20.4), which remained a bishopric across the whole Early Middle Ages, being also chosen first as the seat of a Lombard *gastaldus*, and later of a Frankish *comes*. Records suggest that a 1.8 m wide wall built with reused stones was constructed against the amphitheatre set on the top of the northern hill. Its course here appears to follow the elevated contour, but at the bottom of the hill are traces of wall work in *opus africanum*; this is built over the Roman *cardo* and runs up to the low hill where, in the 6th century, a church was erected over the ruins of the *thermae*. All these operations could be (tentatively) dated to the 6th century.

We can concur with Christie (2006, 322) that the use of *spolia* does not signify panic measures. If a town like Lucca had been directly threatened, there would surely not have been time to plan and undertake such a hugely demanding work – of demolition, clearance, building – these would be tasks requiring many months. City wall building was a public concern and a public enterprise. Private donors could perhaps take part somehow, but the state (or at least the city authorities) controlled the actual work-flow. Restoration works to walls or the authorisation to build against an ancient monument, or to dismantle and reuse materials from such demolitions will likewise have required public permission.

Other cases are documented only by literary sources. In particular, old Etruscan fortified hilltop settlements saw reuse as new refuges or as official military fortresses and some of these even were elevated to bishoprics between the late 6th and 8th centuries. In a small area between Tuscany and Lazio many shifting central places can be observed (Kurze and Citter 1995, 186). However, we have no indications about their fortifications. Perhaps the ancient Etruscan walls, still visible today, remained sufficiently secure for the whole Middle Ages, as seems evident in the case of Sovana (Citter 1996).

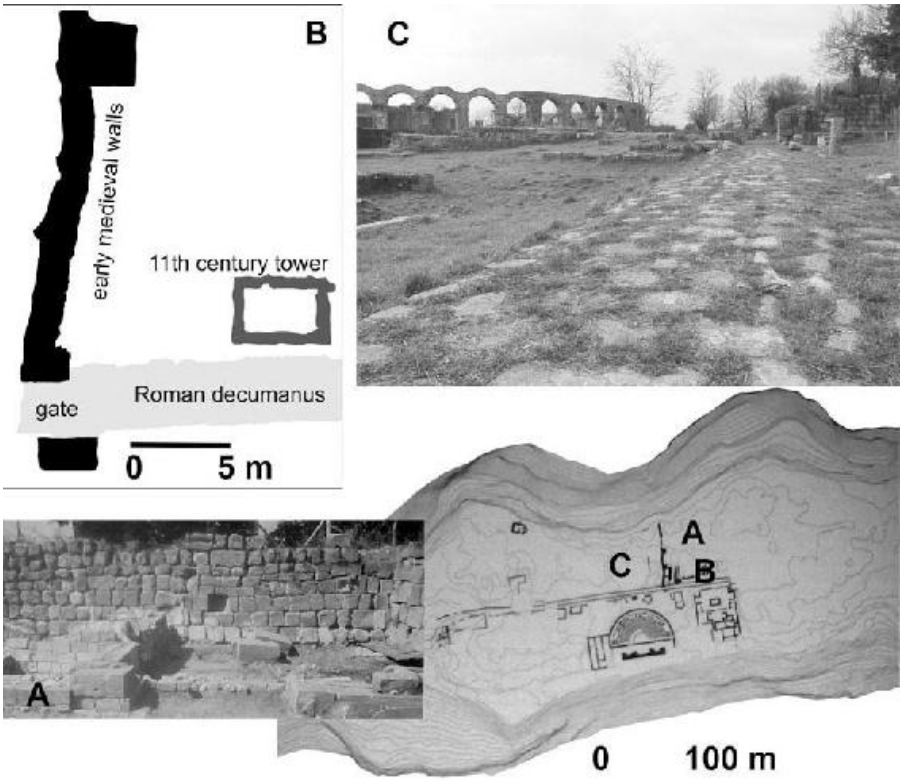

Figure 20.5. The town of Ferento in the Early Middle Ages: A) the early medieval walls within the context of the town centre; B) detail of the excavation of the early medieval walls with a gate on the decumanus and a later tower; C) view of the theatre, the decumanus and the early medieval town walls (Image redrawn from Maetzke et al. 2001).

A notable case study is Ferento (Maetzke *et al.* 2001), whose fortifications might be said to be the latest late antique ones so far known of in central Italy (Fig. 20.5). The town was still worthy enough to receive imperial restorations under Constantine the Great and a bishop was appointed here in the 5th century. In two different moments between the 6th and 7th century a defensive wall was constructed that enclosed the theatre. The first phase featured rectangular towers made of reused stones without mortar bonding, possibly connected by a wooden fence; this was later replaced by a stone wall. This lost its defensive function around the 11th century, when houses were erected against its exterior. In the same period a new circuit wall was built.

The well-known monastery of Montecassino dominates from its

hilltop the plain in which was located Roman *Casinum* (Fig. 20.6). Recent studies (Pietrobono 2012) have identified how a new town wall came to enclose a part of the urban settlement, incorporating the theatre, but not the amphitheatre; the site was certainly still in use when Saint Benedict settled there. A second wall, independent from the town wall, enclosed the monastic settlement in this same period; both circuit and enclosure wall probably saw restorations in the Early Middle Ages. A third enclosure is in fact recorded, set east of the Roman towns, at the foot of an elevated late antique *castrum*. Relevant here is Ferento in southern Lazio, whose acropolis was defended by a curtain wall, whose second phase should pre-date the 9th/10th century (Stasolla 2003).

The Adriatic towns also faced the same severe crisis. *Teates* (Chieti) and *Interamnia* (Teramo) had both lacked any circuit walls, but we see an internal citadel (the *castrum aprutiense*) set up in Teramo in the 6th century, exploiting much *spolia* in its fabric (Somma 2007, 56; Staffa 1997). This *castrum* occupied the town's south-west sector and the core public places (theatre, forum, amphitheatre, early cathedral): three towers are recognised, one in fact reused as the base to the later cathedral belltower. Also in Abruzzo, we can cite *Peltinum*: although a town in decline in the Early Middle Ages, nonetheless, its remaining citizens and authorities closed up the arches of the Roman theatre with rubble to create a stronghold, implying a shrunken town within the old urban circuit (Redi 2009). However, these wider circuit walls were not wholly lost or destroyed, since parts at least remained in use, as indicated by the presence of the church of S. Maria in Ansedonia built up against this (Redi *et al.* 2012, 198–199). The church dedication itself refers to a public granary (*ad sitonia*), recalling Byzantine Cosa on the western coast, whose name was changed to *Ansedonia* before the 9th century (and which still persists). At Anxanum (modern Lanciano), there is some evidence for likely 6th- to 7th-century restorations to the old city walls.

A striking example of late antique fortification works can be seen at the town and harbour of Ancona, whose natural and artificial defences are well described by Procopius (Pani Ermini 1993, 202–206). It is likely that the earlier Roman town was unwalled, but came to be partially fortified under king Theoderic when Italy was in Ostrogothic hands. In particular, we can see a focus on the former

acropolis of the Greek town, thereby enclosing the most defensible portion of the town. Contemporary will have been the construction of a church within the temple of Venus as part of a project that was going to become the rule under the Byzantine. In the same period (5th–6th centuries) the notable harbour of *Centumcellae*, north of Rome, was reinforced by a pentagonal tower and, according to Procopius, given a standing garrison (Pani Ermini 2012, 3).

The town of *Aternum* (modern Pescara) developed as a major Byzantine harbour, connecting the two sides of the Adriatic Sea. This strategic and trade role helps to explain the investment in a fortification wall which endured until the Normans erected a new one in the 12th century. What is unique in central Italy is the use of new bricks to build the Byzantine circuit, generally 1.8 m wide; only along the former harbour zone was this curtain wall built upon and exploiting earlier features (Staffa 2006). The near-rectangular elongated shape of this Byzantine town is fairly typical in late antique fortifications in Italy: it is not dissimilar, for instance, to the contemporary *castrum Gradum* (Grado) in the Venetian lagoon (Brogiolo 2011, 128) and (the earlier) Terracina (Christie and Rushworth 1988).

The Adriatic zone, like the Tyrrhenian one, features several other cases of reuse of amphitheatres as part of the fortifications, including at *Alba Fucens* and *Peltinum* (Somma 2007, 42), in addition to the already cited case of *Rusellae*.

Documentary sources signify that during the 6th and 7th centuries further towns became centres of civil and religious power. Literary sources used to call such sites as a *civitas*, but this term could be misleading. It used to mean just centre of civil or religious power, even if it was a temporary stronghold: *castrum* and *civitas* are often synonymous (Stasolla 2013, 657, 667). One can presume that these should have been fortified; however, evidence is minimal. Some were former Etruscan hilltop towns, like Orvieto, and most probably their huge remains – still visible today – would have provided the starting point to grant protection, but clear indications of this process are overall lacking.

Such archaeology, as outlined above, helps us to ‘read’ the textual guides of Byzantine military treatises from a different perspective. Now we can see that their prescriptions and advice were in fact being

followed by those civic and military authorities who were on the ground, promoting fortification works in Italy (see Stasolla 2013).

Figure 20.6. Cassino: A) the Rocca Ianula fortified complex with a fortified monastery on the hilltop and a 5 ha enclosure at the foot of the hill; B) the Roman town of Casinum with the enclosure which hosted the first monastery of St. Benedict; C) the medieval and modern monastery complex of St. Benedict (Images redrawn from Pietrobono 2012).

The Early Middle Ages (7th–10th Centuries): Restorations and New Walled Towns

As seen, therefore, at the start of the Middle Ages, many towns in central Italy, both on hilltops and on the plain, were walled/defended. This fact explains why we can trace (as yet) only a handful of new foundations which constitute a special category. These new sites were all ones promoted by the papacy during the 9th century. The clearest example is *Leopolis* (Cencelle – see Fig. 20.7), located not far from the Roman harbour of *Centumcellae*, and built at the instigation of Pope Leo IV (AD 847–855). The recent exhibition with its detailed publication of the long-running investigations here (Stasolla 2012) demonstrates that the late medieval town walls were built upon the 9th-century Leonine walls. Pope Leo sought to create a strong, sizeable enclosure on what was a deserted hilltop, to host the townsfolk fleeing from the exposed old Roman town of *Centumcellae*: the whole plateau was fortified, using local red tufa – uniquely for this period, freshly quarried – which is different from the tufa used in the late medieval

walls here; but there are some signs that the circuit may have also reused segments of a remnant Etruscan-period wall. The new circuit walls featured only two gates. Interestingly, the southern one was embellished with an inscription recording the pope's act of urban foundation.

While further papal new towns are recorded in the contemporary Vatican City and in Ostia (Pani Ermini 1992), these differ from Cencelle in that they enclosed existing inhabited areas which had no previous walled defences. By contrast Cencelle was a new, planned town, one that had strategic – defensive (refuge) and offensive (securing a road and frontier) – roles (Pani Ermini 2014).

Apart from these, we know of few newly-built early medieval town walls. The decline of Ferento follows the growth of Viterbo, the *Beturbon* mentioned by the Anonymous of Ravenna at the end of the 7th century (Kurze and Citter 1995), and recorded later in 8th- and 9th-century charters as a *castrum*. The first reference to a defensive wall comes in a document of AD 808 (Güll *et al.* 2001). A small portion of these early medieval fortifications is still visible. Elsewhere, before *Centumcellae* was abandoned, the old defences appear to have seen some restoration work in the 8th century, but this was presumably ineffective – perhaps due to too small a population remaining to man the walls. The case of Chieti is an unusual example in having two *castra* in the post-classical period: according to documentary references, these came to be enclosed in a new circuit under the Carolingians (Somma 2007, 59).

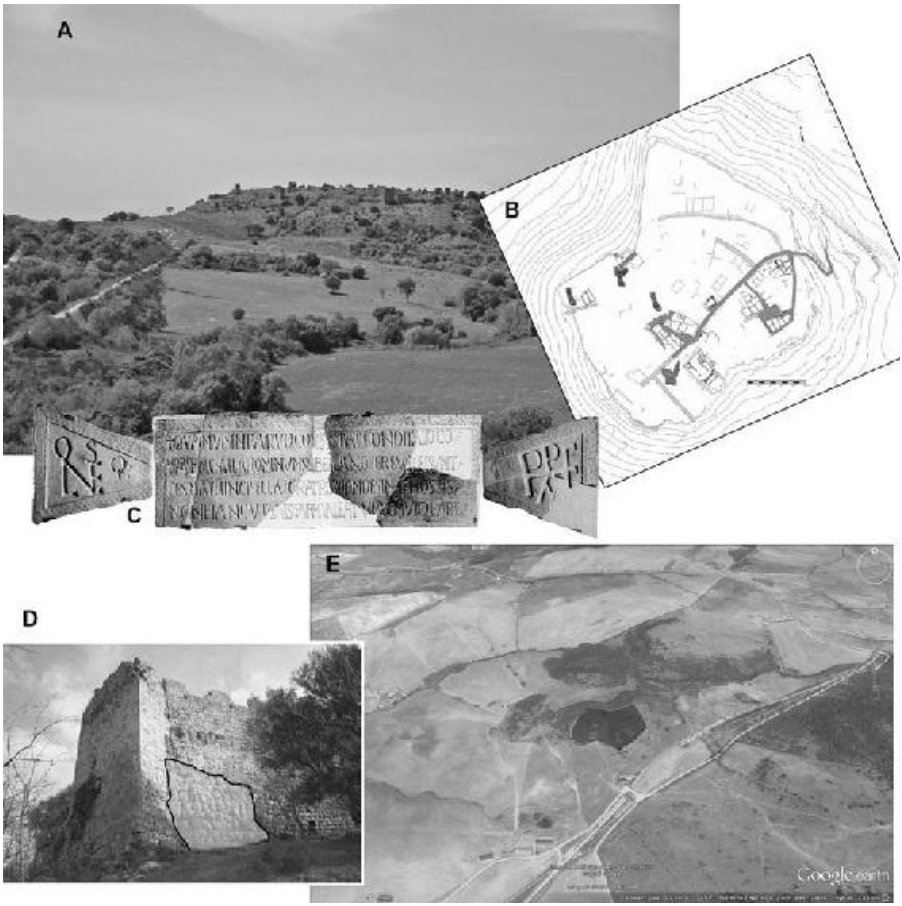

Figure 20.7. Cencelle: A) the hill of the medieval town; B) site plan (Source: Stasolla 2012, 19, fig. 2); C) the inscription of Pope Leo IV on the town walls (Stasolla 2012, 2, fig. 6); D) the early medieval walls (in white) still visible in the late medieval curtain (Stasolla 2012, 26, fig. 9); E) the hill of Cencelle, with the extension of the town shown in light grey (Source: Google earth).

Also north of Rome, new excavations, supported by detailed wall analyses, enable part of the walled circuit of *Veii*, an Etruscan town north of Rome, to be dated securely to the 9th century (Cerasuolo and Pulcinelli 2013).

South of Rome similar data are emerging. For example, like Ferentino, Alatri was a pre-Roman hilltop site, already possessing a massive man-made stone wall (De Minicis 1999); several restorations and modifications are attested here before the 9th/10th century, both in the town walls and in some of the larger internal buildings; we can also trace a tower over the town gate (Stasolla 2003).

In addition, we might anticipate that, alongside patched-up old

stone walls, many towns may have featured banks and wooden palisades protecting parts of the settlement as in the case of Ferento. But here the archaeology of such sites (especially former Roman towns) has often been badly compromised by older excavations and site clearances, which, in some cases, has caused the almost complete destruction of the early medieval archaeological stratigraphy. And of course, because these often ephemeral or fragile traces are now unrecoverable, even after scrutiny of the archival documentation, there will be a bias towards any stone-built remains and far less expectation of timber elements. However, comparison with early medieval rural settlements in the wider European context (as evident in other contributions in this volume) would suggest that wooden palisades should not have been unusual or exceptional in many a contemporary townscape.

The Turn of the Millennium: The Emergent Communal Towns

In the thematic context of 'city/town walls', the year 1000 offers a scenario with at least two different categories of towns. The first comprises the emergent communal towns of northern Tuscany and other towns both in Lazio and on Italy's Adriatic flank. The expansion rate seems sluggish in the 10th century, but became so rapid in the 12th that the authorities needed to plan and build a new curtain wall. Thus, despite the population increasing in the 10th century, no archaeological proof of revised fortifications occurs until the 12th. This implies that the new walls were the result of the full development of communal institutions, which projected and constructed these defences as a public show of wealth, power and self-identity (Citter 2012, 34–36). A further mark of this new authority is evident in the transition from timber-built townscapes to ones of stone and brick. Strikingly, declining towns saw minimal efforts in this direction; indeed, unsuccessful towns received no attention from the public authorities of the communal period.

The creation of new walls in the second half of the 12th century was not only a planned single action. The case of Siena (Brogini 1997; Cantini 2011, 53–54), while still deficient in key archaeological data, has enough evidence available to show that it grew by incorporating

several *burgi* (villages situated outside the walls) within the city's confines already in the 11th century. At Pescara the Byzantine circuit wall of the late 6th century was partly restored and modified in the reign of Roger II (Staffa 2006). In Sovana a wall was built upon the Etruscan one, and most probably denotes a 12th- and 13th-century enterprise, datable mainly through comparing the sizes of the blocks employed with those of other buildings; however, we cannot exclude it being a much older work, which might have been imitated by later builders (Citter 1996).

In theory it should be easier to date a new set of curtain walls than it is to pinpoint when older walls were restored – especially if only fragments of those defences survive or if rebuilding has masked possible early medieval interventions. Given that wall-work (and street and bridge maintenance) was an ongoing a public duty across this period, minor upkeep might have been regular and barely perceptible to us. Much emphasis has been placed on likely refurbishment in the earlier Carolingian period of town walls, and yet we usually exclude the 10th century without any reasonable explanation. In truth, the Ottonian period is now being proven to have marked a starting point for the re-development of European towns and their hinterlands (see Henning 2007 and, for central Italy, Citter 2009).

Evaluating the Dataset: Some Concluding Notes

This essay can be concluded by highlighting some key points that arise from the data explored above. Firstly, arguably, we now have a fairly robust archaeological dataset for 6th- to 12th-century towns in central Italy. However, within that dataset, details about their fortifications remain scanty and concentrated in three specific periods: the 5th–6th centuries, the 9th century and the 12th.

We should abandon the idea of a general 'late antique' restoration/building of city walls. We can instead trace restorations and new fortifications across the 3rd to late 6th century AD. This is the legacy that the early medieval towns inherited from their Roman past. Despite local variances, the 5th- to 6th-century fortifications often comprise walls of 1.8 m width, and feature massive, rectangular towers.

The majority of these late antique defences seem to persist through

the Early Middle Ages without further change, whether in a modest enterprise like *Rusellae* or in a more sizeable public example like *Aternum*. There is no good evidence that walls failed due to floods, earthquakes, or even wars, although some sites suffered sieges, such as in the Gothic–Byzantine Wars.

In general, the function of the fortification is no longer present just to distinguish the town from the countryside. In fact, a majority of the craftsmen used to work and live in the suburbs of the classical city, outside the walls; things did not change much in Late Antiquity (cf. Liverani 2011; Brogiolo 2011, 134–139).

Scholars have keenly debated the respective roles of the Ostrogoths, the Byzantines and the Lombards in terms of their defensive strategy and programmes (*e.g.* Pani Ermini 1995 for Rome). One should be cautious about early medieval references to *castra*, since the term is not always synonymous with recently stone-built fortifications/fortresses. Frontier forts can be recognised in Alpine zones, but many *castra* once thought to be Byzantine appear to be earlier in date; but we should assume Byzantine-and Lombard-period use and thus renewal of fortified towns.

The questions Christie has raised about the interpretation of late antique and early medieval town defences remain largely open (2006, 288–289). It is tempting to establish a univocal cause–effect relationship between, for instance, earlier fortifications and urban rank, quality of build/technique and Imperial interest. Sometimes this is true, but it is certainly not the rule. The same questions continue to confront scholars regarding reduced fortifications or citadels within the former wall circuit, often enclosing a palace and the main church, and in many cases exploiting a classical monument such as an entertainment building.

The actual role of the public/civic authorities must remain debatable too. Sometimes we have literary evidence of permissions, at least up to the 6th century. We have clear indications of public, now local, interest pushed to project and build the new communal circuits of the 12th century. Currently, we have no clear indications of what occurred between these phases apart from the well documented papal new towns, and the general concern of the early medieval laws about public spaces and buildings. There may be many explanations. The first one is that town walls remained public, and thus they appear in

the written record only when the public authority is weak and disputes arise. In reality, the generally scattered early medieval townscape could hardly fit into an enclosure. This is perhaps the easiest answer to the question. In fact, the only new circuit walls so far recognised belong to a special category of strategic 'new towns' founded by different popes in the 9th century. The town walls, no matter what their date, restoration/refurbishment, did not usually enclose the *whole* of the early medieval town; nor did they enclose the whole late antique townscape.

Walls are usually a parameter for evaluating population levels and growth. Of course, this statement is not wholly accurate: if we compare the 10 hectares enclosed by the walls of Roman Florence with the 448 hectares of the city's final, 13th-century curtain wall, we can easily guess that the area should have been more densely populated. In other cases one should be cautious, bearing in mind the key role of the often undefinable suburbs.

The use of new materials to build or restore curtain walls seems very rare in the early medieval context. *Spolia* is much more often the rule, especially in the major old Roman towns. We know that this is not indicative of panic, nor the lack of availability of materials, nor a lack of capability to open new quarries. On the other hand, it is striking that Cencelle was founded in its specific location so that the engineers could profit from good quarries and tuff outcrops nearby.

Chronologies remain a common problem, even in the case of well documented sequences, which are not, as seen, the rule. We can often propose a *terminus ante/post quem* to a circuit or repair, but it is problematic to narrow down the range. In fact, too frequently we tend to ascribe a piece of wall or its restoration to one of the major phases within a region – archaeologists and historians alike follow the rhythm of the literary sources which are almost silent between the 7th and 9th centuries. The result is that fewer evident phases remain underestimated. In those cases where the possibility for close scrutiny of the wall fabric still exists, we should seek to obtain C14 data from the mortars. The case of *Veii* should alert us to the potential of revisiting such old sites.

Timber-built fortifications may well have been typical in the Early Middle Ages, but as yet we have almost no relevant data on these, although the case of Ferento is very instructive. Furthermore, we must

recall that, in this period, much domestic construction work was in timber and this building medium may have been employed on public works. This contributes to the possibility that we are underestimating the issue of 'fortification' within early medieval Italian townscapes.

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21

Fortified Settlements of the 8th to 10th Centuries. Italy and the Case of Tuscany

Marco Valenti

Introduction

The investigation of castles is one of the key issues addressed by Italian medieval historians and archaeologists over the last 30 years. The debate began in the 1980s, especially in response to historiographical models, notably that proposed by Pierre Toubert for Southern Lazio in 1973. Research has, arguably, been focused primarily on defining the origins of castles, seeking an answer to a fairly simple question, namely: were these new foundations or rather fortifications of existing early medieval centres?

Generally speaking, there are two main subjects that we can isolate in archaeological research on fortified settlements (see Valenti 2004): (i) late antique–early medieval fortifications and (ii) enclosed contexts of the 8th–10th centuries, which written sources do not define as castles yet which often underlie later castles.

The first line of research studies the system of *castra* and was addressed mainly in the 1990s (Brogiolo and Gelichi 1996). This new form of settlement was influenced by those same military-political strategies that determined the crisis or success of many ancient cities. *Castra* were of state foundation and appear largely attested in central and northern Italy, beginning in the late 4th century in the Alpine regions and then across the rest of the peninsula between the second

half of the 6th and the 7th centuries. Once their strategic role was lost, those fortified sites that endured were those which forged an economic and territorial control; in other words, those sites which attracted aristocracies retained jurisdiction over a dependent territory and managed to secure the agricultural surplus needed to maintain themselves.

Beyond this initial phase of fortifications – and, in some cases, beyond their (often long) lifetimes – the practice of protecting settlements never stopped: rural sites surrounded by defences are archaeologically well attested in Italy throughout the whole Early Middle Ages. In fact, the second research theme specifically focuses on early medieval fortified centres. Recent developments indicate their existence at least since the 8th century, gaining particular emphasis with the Carolingian Frankish era (see Valenti 2008). For these settlements, and the economic system they were part of, we can definitely talk of private initiatives in the protection and management of capital (the land), primarily in relation to the control of rural production. Ultimately, these fortified centres were intended as the real means of accumulation of capital for the local elites emerging in that period (For key literature on these themes, see Francovich and Valenti 2005 and Valenti 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010a for Tuscany).

Fortified Settlements between the 8th and 10th Centuries AD (Fig. 21.1)

Sites of this period reveal the existence of a still very ruralised society where the countryside, subject to a significant strengthening of economic control, became the primary source of wealth and success for middle and upper social strata that invested in it. The choice to optimise the exploitation of agricultural land led to a topographical and often planned definition, or redefinition, of settlements. Since these were the spaces where the labour force was ‘anchored’, so we find defences imposed to protect the assets. The examples relate both to large landowners of the lay and ecclesiastical aristocracy and to more local elites all over Italy. In the vast majority of cases we have fortified villages that are, in fact, agricultural holdings – i.e. manorial estates.

Figure 21.1. Map of the main sites mentioned in the text (Image: author).

A very clear example of this evident effort and desire for control, organisation, management and defence occurs in Piadena (Cremona), which can be defined as a lordly enterprise (Brogiolo and Mancassola 2005). Located within a bend in the river Oglio, this was a composite settlement formed by two courts: one consisted of a castle with ditch and palisade, initially owned by the bishop of Cremona and then by the Canossa family; the other, also with a castle and extended dependencies, was originally held by the Canossa, who donated it in the early 11th century to the bishop of Cremona. A late 10th-century document records a settlement outside the episcopal fortification, inhabited by serfs; others lived inside the castle, likely in the small

wooden houses identified during the excavations (notably in Area F). The Piadena site shows evidence of strong settlement planning: between the 9th and 11th century, wooden houses, separated by narrow alleys/corridors, were established and occupied in two parallel rows alongside a central trench or ditch; while there were frequent phases of demolition and reconstruction, we can observe a generally static topography, with only minor changes or shifts in the layout. In Area F in the 10th century, the renovation of a building was prepared by reusing some of its elements: its horizontal beams were left *in situ*, while the upright posts were cut at their base or entirely removed; then the older floor layers were covered with a sandy silt, on top of which two new buildings were erected, noticeably featuring the same construction technique, orientation and size as the previous house.

It can be stressed that power was being manifested in the built and open space, in organising the settlement and in restricting the peasants to the same spaces; the static nature of the house plots implies population control (of individuals, families, labour). Piadena, a real economic undertaking that was consolidated over time, ultimately reveals one of the main features of these policies for the control of agricultural production, based on rationalisation and stabilisation of the property assets, even if the resident farming families change.

In southern Italy, one useful guide is Montella (Avellino) whose long-term settlement likewise stresses the continuity of occupation of spaces and their transformation based within an economic and political project (Rotili 2011). Between the 6th and 7th centuries AD this site comprised a village, whereas in the 8th century written sources identify it as a *curtis* or estate. Excavations have shown the existence of two separate parts, one on the hilltop and one on the slopes; both were defended by palisades and characterised by buildings on stone foundations. During the 9th/10th century the hilltop settlement was rebuilt and refortified. The features of defensive and residential structures potentially signify the castle as the seat of a gastald (the local representative/administrator of the State attested in the Italian early medieval documentary sources). Montella is just one example of the fairly regular transition from *curtis* to castle and the consequent dispersal of State power into the hands of a partly new aristocracy, which drew its economic and political support from the

recently acquired, but already defined, landed properties. Ultimately, the transformation into a castle, creating an administrative and political seat to an already fortified agricultural undertaking, attracted public investment and saw the manorial estate, probably turned into a village seigneury, becoming also a centre with the functions of a gastaldate.

Signs of Power

In any context, a pronounced control of activities, goods, foodstuffs and labour, which find their counterpart in built and planned features of rural centres, can be identified as signifying material power exercised by a leading figure. We can regularly recognise settlements where production is aimed at wealth accumulation, which is often protected, even from immediate residents, through a physical separation of elite and peasant spaces. Indicators are evident in the structural changes to both the village form and individual residential building types, signifying efforts towards a centralisation of production (animals, tools, work-/craft-shops) and a generation thereby of wealth: managing and stockpiling of local resources would be for personal consumption, control of peasants and local redistribution but also, at least in part, for sale in urban markets (Valenti 2007 and 2012b; Valenti and Wickham eds 2013).

A first notable example is Montarrenti (Sovicille – SI = Siena province), an early medieval village with a hilltop enclosure (Cantini 2003). After the mid-8th century, changes were made to both the fortress (the palisade was replaced by a mortared stone wall, possibly serving as a base for wooden or earthen superstructure – see Fronza, this volume) and building design and function (some huts were replaced by a large rectangular wooden storehouse for cereals). The area was also equipped with facilities for grinding and drying grain – indicating spaces now dedicated to processing, storing and accumulating goods. The excavations at Poggibonsi (SI) have been equally valuable (Francovich and Valenti 2007; Valenti 2010b): here the Carolingian period marks a notable re-planning of the community, transforming a village into a settlement that strongly recalls the German and Scandinavian magnate's farm or *Herrenhof* (see Poulsen and Sindbæk 2011; Klápště 2013), surrounded by what might be termed 'workers' houses'. The site was organised around a large

longhouse and included annexes, service structures and storehouses for foodstuffs; animals appear to have been kept inside the central zone and craft activities (an iron forge, a butcher's and a pottery kiln) were so positioned as to lie under the direct control of the landlord. A steady increase in the frequency of cattle at the expense of other domesticates, plus the insertion of a large barn and a highly articulated storage area inside the longhouse, denote a shift towards a distinctly agricultural economy (only sheep-goat breeding probably survived).

A further example is Miranduolo (Chiusdino – SI), a site characterised by very important archaeobotanical assemblages of the 9th–11th centuries; here, two very special features mark out the early medieval settlement: a timber palisade and two dry moats, these part of the reorganisation and re-planning of the hilltop site, changed the settlement morphology, isolating and securing spaces occupied by – or at least belonging to – the leading local family (Valenti 2008). These works and interventions, discussed fully below, provide a quantitative and a qualitative sense to landed power and its material manifestation within an economic complex designed to produce wealth and exercise social control in the form of foodstuffs, and one therefore needing to be guarded and defended.

What we are in fact witnessing in these cases, are blatant projects of site planning/re-planning, aimed primarily at streamlining productivity; at a structural level, village and production become one thing. Indeed, I would argue that many of these villages were rural economic undertakings in the fullest sense of the term, at least from the 9th century; we could almost call them enterprises, assuming that we accept to use a modern term. While facing an archaeological difficulty – if not impossibility – to define the personal *status* of the inhabitants, it is nonetheless possible to observe macro-distinctions between those who coordinated production or at least held a higher quality of life (namely a small minority) and those who populated the centre (the majority of residents) representing the real means of production. These early medieval centuries seem ultimately marked by the choices of the members of an economic elite. In their policy of centralisation, they can be seen to have implemented social control mechanisms aimed at diminishing the practical difference between serfs and free men. Overall they sought to gain suitable profit from

their properties, protecting themselves through multi-level control of the peasant groups gathered in a network of villages. Power over the workers was the essential condition for the formation and accumulation of capital in the form of goods and food supplies (see Valenti 2013a).

The Relationship with the City

Cities even in the Early Middle Ages remained the most attractive of markets, places where elites could trade their surplus of foodstuffs and their craft goods (Brogiolo 2011). Opportunities were not lacking, since, besides their general inhabitants, towns were seats of public and ecclesiastical authorities, retaining a political-administrative dominance over regional areas; in some cases, at various times and in various combinations, towns might also have served as military, religious, commercial and productive centres. In this sense, cities were the reference point for a countryside with wide and consolidated spaces of landed and territorial power linked to the ruling classes. This localisation of rural power was exercised by an elite (as noted above) which could be diverse in its composition: city officials with a strong economic base built during their mandates and with a solid clientele; families of well-established landowners who maintained a revenue base; clienteles of monasteries and bishoprics; military officials, etc.

In general, the principal difference between these various owners controlling the countryside lies in the nature of their power. Hence we need to think of or seek to recognise strategies according to the needs, on the one hand, of the *milites* (free and armed men, representing a key element in the formation of the rural élites based on landed property) who were engaged in consolidating their territory and profits; on the other hand there were monasteries, or ecclesiastical entities at large, more open to exchange circuits which could support them, increase their resources and secure connections and protection. In sum, we might be faced with two similar but different ways to manage assets, to control people and to interact with urban seats.

Archaeology reveals in fact the presence of centres such as Nonantola created, shaped and developed by the economic undertakings of monastic institutions with an important local family, or of important churches. The clearest evidence comes from the excavations carried out in Sant'Agata Bolognese (Modena), a site

identifiable with the *castrum de Ponte Longi* mentioned in a document of the very late 10th century. The village, however, emerged in the late 9th century along a waterway and only became a castle in the 10th century. The whole area was fortified by digging out a moat and raising an embankment to gird the settlement, which was further protected by a robust palisade of oak wood. A motte with a wooden tower was later built outside the original fortification, ensuring control over the previous installation. This event marks the action of a higher figure, probably the abbey of Nonantola, together with some local and important family, in hierarchising the settlement mainly for economic purposes. In fact, the site's defences, besides representing a possible refuge for local farmers, were needed to protect those productive and commercial activities which had inspired the transformation of the older settlement. Such actions reveal a desire for control and rationalisation: *negotiatores* are often mentioned in contemporary documents and excavations have revealed important metal-working activities, including goldsmithing. The structural re-working of the site is striking: the spaces of power (the motte) were detached and made distinct from the rest of the settlement; the workers/inhabitants – dependent or free we cannot ascertain, but they were certainly linked in various ways to the site's dominant figures – were confined to a precise area of the site, forming the village related to the structures of power. Farming and breeding activities occurred, but finds reveal the site participating, with an active and perhaps leading role, in wider channels of distribution and exchange at least on an inter-regional scale. A brief survey of the material culture highlights this: there is soapstone from the alpine area, many millstones of volcanic stone from the western Alps, glass artefacts, and imported glazed pottery (Gelichi *et al.* 2014).

The case of San Michele di Trino (near Vercelli, Piedmont) is comparable (Negro Ponzi 1999). During the 9th to 10th centuries the village of wooden houses was associated with a masonry church featuring both internal and external burials, and perhaps a wall circuit. The evidence for the Carolingian-Ottonian period suggests the presence of a civilian settlement with some craft activities, witnessed in iron slag and a likely furnace. The productive vocation, if perhaps lacking a clear specialisation, characterises Trino much more strongly after a violent destruction of the site due to a likely war episode: in

the 10th and 11th centuries the site developed into a new form with functional timber buildings occupying the north-eastern area, while houses with wooden walls over mortared stone bases were found in the north-western part; a new and larger church with privileged burials was built; and prominent industrial activities are evident, both in metal working and glass production, as well as animal breeding and trade of meat, leather tanning, bone- and antler-working.

More to the south, for early medieval Rome, we possess even clearer data. The foundation of *domuscultae* from the mid-8th century signifies a coherent papal economic plan, one of entrepreneurial nature and aimed at securing and storing foodstuffs serving various needs: charity to the poor, sustenance of its clerical hierarchy, but also an availability of goods for exchange. *Domuscultae* were, in practice, large estates directly run by the Church, consisting of complexes of farms organised on multiple village cores, thus excluding the mediation of tenants which reduced the *dominus* to a simple recipient of an annuity. The farmers (defined as both *militia* and *Familia Sancti Petri*) were subject to the same rights and dues exercised by the lay lords; in fact, they were required to help, for example, in the construction of the Leonine city walls girding the Vatican in the mid-9th century (Gibson and Ward-Perkins 1979, 32-33). In these settlements we again observe a planned organisation of spaces, even though resources were chiefly devolved to the construction and decoration of new estate churches (or the restoration of existing ones) and to an extensive use of masonry for buildings and fortifications.

Excavations on sites such as Santa Cornelia and Mola di Monte Gelato or le Mura di Santo Stefano in Anguillara, albeit incomplete or not exhaustive, reveal estates or village types that are not very dissimilar in their economic articulation and vocation from the rural centres of the secular aristocracy (Christie 1991; Potter and King 1997; Van der Noort and Whitehouse 2009). The differences are mainly recognisable in the use of building materials and in their relationship with the territory: the religious buildings in fact held a dual role in that they represented the fulcrum around which the economic enterprise was organised and they were also the places where sacraments were administered. A focal site was Santa Cornelia, north of Rome, founded under Pope Hadrian in the later 8th century and later extended to form a settlement (estate centre) with buildings

located within a trapezoidal wall circuit and focussed on a compact basilica church with baptistery; barns, storehouses, workshops, presumed administrative quarters and other functional buildings surrounded it on the remaining sides. The presence of the bodies of four pope-saints in the church meanwhile highlights not just the eminent status of the site in the landscape but also a papal desire to attract in pilgrims to further boost the *domusculta*'s economic significance.

If Rome remains an atypical or special example given the presence of the popes and its still large population, in Italy, generally speaking, the link between towns/cities and rural areas, beyond the flow of goods related to the payment of royalties and taxes, must have been established through the control and management of trade by landownership, whether secular or ecclesiastical, relying mainly on the exchange of foodstuffs and, if on a lower scale, of artefacts produced by individual estates. Apart from Rome, I do not see any urban settlement in such a position of dominance over the rural areas to be considered as supply basins for various kinds of resources. In reality, this relationship was mediated by the protagonism of those who were in possession of medium or large assets articulated in the exploitation of several *fundi* organised around villages; these landowners probably divided their time between urban residences and their rural seats (the shame of course being that we cannot compare the nature of their estate and town houses).

An Example of the Long Gestation of Power - Miranduolo

Extensive excavations at the castle of Miranduolo in the territory of Chiusdino (SI) started in 2001 and are ongoing; so far more than 85% of the space enclosed by the castle walls has been excavated, as well as several external areas (Fig. 2). It is a unique case, since for the first time in Italy there has been the opportunity to excavate the full castle complex and not just a part of it through a few small (or sometimes also fairly large) trenches (the frequently limited dimensions of excavated areas is a general problem of Italian – and much wider – archaeological research projects).

The Miranduolo project thus enables a coherent and hugely

informative story of the site's form, role, status and occupants to be written for the entire Early Middle Ages (the site is fully published with a comprehensive bibliography, plus specialist reports and live updates at: https://www.facebook.com/miranduolo and http://archeologiamedievale.unisi.it/miranduolo/. See also Fronza 2012a; Valenti 2008a, 2008b, 2010b, 2012a, 2012b, 2013b; for bioarchaeological aspects see Dall'Olio and Putti 2015). In particular, the exceptional evidence generated allows us to read the complex and long-term formation process of an early medieval village, steadily marked by an increasing social hierarchisation, to be read in parallel with the development of local elites. It can be regarded as a typical case for central and southern Tuscany, representing perhaps the best investigated example of the so-called 'Tuscan model' (Francovich and Hodges 2003; Valenti 2004, 2014). Three main and distinct early medieval phases are recognised:

Figure 21.2. Miranduolo (Chiusdino, prov. Siena). Aerial photograph of the site in Autumn 2014 (Image: author).

(i) A 7th-century industrial site

It can be argued that the first occupation on the hill was the result of decisions taken by a 'strong power', most likely that of a public entity, designed to harness and exploit the territory's mineral potential and so involving the transfer here of skilled workers. In the mid-7th century,

a precise functional subdivision of this new settlement complex is evident: while houses are fairly scattered and consist mainly of small sunken-featured buildings, the entire western side is occupied by an iron production area with features for crushing ore and a row of furnaces for iron reduction (Fronza *et al*. 2012; La Salvia and Anguilano 2015); exploitation was of mixed sulphides veins and limonite located on the hill's eastern side (but with other mines and open pit work mining beyond). This was, effectively, an industrial village inhabited by miners and smelters, active in the raw metalworking, probably generating ingots or bars (the striking absence of any actual metal object in this phase lends support to this idea) to be transferred elsewhere to be forged, perhaps to a major centre or to specific places of exchange.

If we assign planning, direction and ownership to a 'public' power, then we can begin to think about the village as located in a fiscal area, perhaps directly managed by the Lombard administrator or gastald of the city of Volterra for either the city or even the crown. A private individual could surely not have managed such a complex operation. Moreover, it is important to note that in the Early Middle Ages, the Roman concept of industrial monopolies (well known also in the Hellenistic world: νό νοι τελονικοί) had turned into the notion of *regalia*, a typical institute of Germanic law that placed markets and mills, forests and streams, salt-works and mines under royal power. In fact, the genesis of the concept of *regalia*, until its formalisation in the *Constitutio de regalibus* issued under Frederick I in 1158 is a complex and much discussed subject (*e.g.* Abignente 1888; Schröder 1889, 523f; Salvioli 1930, 476f; and assessed in Kannowski 2007). In particular, it is unclear if *regalia* over mining activities has an autonomous root in the 11th century as a direct derivation of the Roman public law; however, the strict control exercised by Lombard kings over the extraction of precious metals, noted even in the *Edictum Rothari* of AD 643, is known (cf. Francovich 1995, 8–10; Farinelli and Francovich 1994, 447–456). In sum, with all things considered (the material evidence and the juridical questions), I am convinced that at Miranduolo, in this phase, the State controlled the ore exploitation and circulation of metals.

(ii) An 8th-century village with twin landlords

During the 8th century the village underwent a major transformation both in economic terms and in its structural layout, with the new design revealing an agricultural centre displaying clear indications of social stratification (Nardini 2012; Nardini 2015). This remodelling of the settlement's form and role does not signify an exhaustion of the mineral veins (in fact, they remain a resource through to the permanent abandonment of the hilltop in the early 14th century); rather it denotes a change in production strategy and an evolution of the powers dominating the site, which involves the whole village and its inhabitants. We can see the community divided into at least three groups occupying different steps of a hierarchical scale (Fig. 21.3). On the lowest level were the family units engaged in agricultural work; they lived in wooden huts (many marked by the presence of a grain pit), most of which were of constant dimensions (20–21 m2 – only one of the structures was smaller than 15 m2, only one greater than 24 m2). Such people made up the productive 'mass'. However, elements of differentiation emerge around this, visible in the presence of some privileged nuclei that express a different personal position and their disposal of more 'wealth', as marked in the control exercised over large areas of grain storage and also, less prominently but equally significantly, in the distinctive features of their homes and material culture. In particular, we recognise two prominent areas on the western slopes and on the hilltop (Fig. 21.4), occupied by people of highest social level; a third and a fourth nucleus seem, at this time, to identify two families better equipped than the 'mass' and thus representing the mid-range social level.

Greater emphasis to the distinctive character of the two prominent spaces comes from the arrangement of the peasant huts: these are located side by side on the southern slope of the hill, forming a sort of separation between the two core areas which can be read as large 'magnate' farms (see above).

The first of these main areas is set on the western side of the hill and shows the most consistent elite signs (Fig. 21.5). This large space of *c*. 14 × 14 m features 38 grain pits excavated into the rock, divided into five concentrated groups; a palisade, marked by an alignment of 12 postholes, enclosed the whole storage area as well as an open space characterised by black soil with a high organic content which yielded numerous finds (pottery, animal bones, glass, metal, bone artefacts,

etc.); this open area probably relates to a vegetable garden and/or an animal yard and midden, whose finds points also to some (nearby?) metallurgical activity (slags and furnace debris). Core is a 30 m2 house of elongated rectangular plan featuring a single pitched roof, resting on an artificially created terrace. On the directly higher platform of the same outcrop a wooden church was built: this religious building was of N-S orientation and featured a semi-circular apse, whose shape was clearly visible as a cut in the bedrock, even if part-obliterated by the stone base of a later altar and burial. A narrow trench delineated the apse and perhaps indicated the church's construction scaffolding; an alignment of other postholes at the centre of the plateau perhaps belonged to a simple balustrade delimiting the presbytery (Fronza 2012b).

Thus the settlement's centre of power was represented by the church, the adjacent house and a large storage area. This complex stands out from the rest of the settlement in location/elevation but also by merit of its palisade, protecting its food reserves and – presumably – the metalworking activities. Materials are of good quality and quantity, some of them also hinting at the presence of more complex economic dynamics: the many ceramic forms relating to small, double-handled amphorae are different from all the other storage containers and relate to transportation of foodstuffs (for the ceramic finds of this phase see Mariottini 2015). These might attest an importation of certain products not locally available (*e.g.* olive oil) or else point to an exportation of internal agricultural products.

Figure 21.3. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – SI). Social hierarchy of the 8th-century village (Image: author).

Figure 21.4. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – SI). The two fortified power nuclei of the 8th-century village (Image: author).

Does this articulation of status reveal a village organised as part of a manorial estate or else a sort of agricultural holding directly managed from the fortified complex headed by the church? Or perhaps the main landowner handled his assets at a distance, while the supervision of agricultural production and the storage of foodstuffs were taken care of by the officiating priest or by one of his men, such as an emancipated servant or a son? In other words, might the agent in charge of managing the productive centre, or a part of the controlled lands, have been a religious cleric? Finally, who was at the head of this major change in the productive nature of the settlement? A successful landowner, perhaps the head of a new family replacing or buying out the estate of the individual who had founded the village? Was there an act of appropriation, changed rights and concessions which cannot be gauged through the archaeology? Perhaps we might even see here a settlement actually owned by the Church?

Any answer we give to the questions above might seem convincing. However, the presence at Miranduolo of a second nucleus, with similar characteristics to the one just described, tells us that the diagram of power was more complex and articulated: another storage area for grain surplus in fact has been recognised on the north-eastern slope, very close to the crest – at a point exactly where, a few decades later, during the 9th century, would be set the main house and the village focus. Two possible hypotheses could explain these dual foci: (i) we might have an area related to the identified ecclesiastical structure and the site 'manager' and a second, communal storage space that related directly to the needs of the farmer residents; or (ii) we can propose two rival (but balanced) areas within the same settlement, one led/overseen by the church unit and one managed by a secular (individual, lordly?) expression of power that we cannot closely interpret. What is striking, however, is that this second locale of power would soon become the site's dominant one.

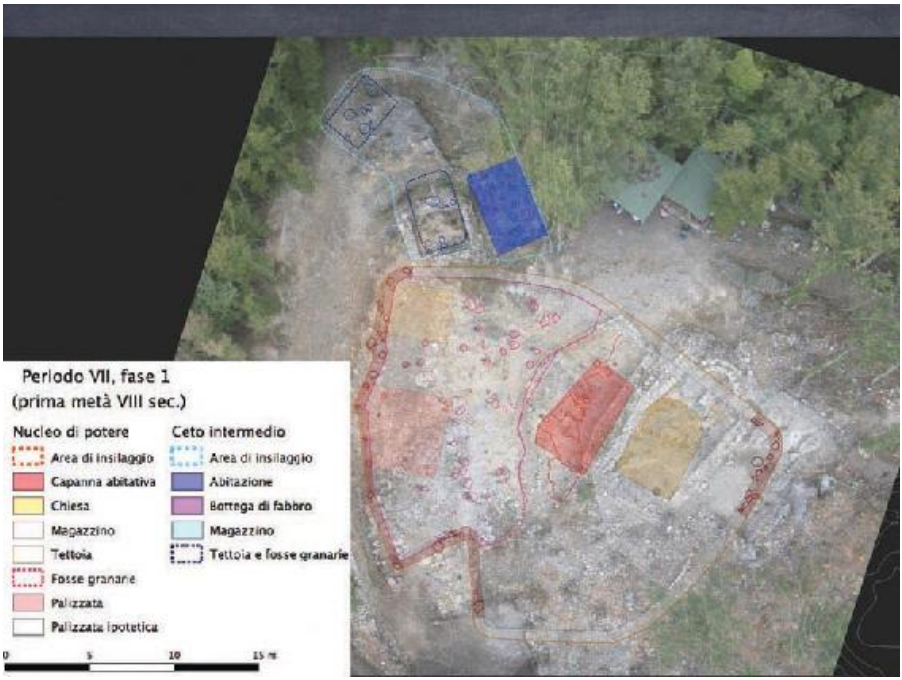

Figure 21.5. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – SI). The ecclesiastical power nucleus of the 8th-century village (Image: author).

There are also traces of actors with an intermediate economic position, one less elevated than the two main nuclei but very different from the more lowly and controlled peasant units on the southern slopes of the hill. In fact, there are two particular contexts occupying the terraces on the north-western and on the north-eastern side of the hill. The first of these peasant families lived not far from the complex coordinated by the religious power. It was represented by a rectangular wooden house set against the vertical cut of a terrace and therefore with a single-pitched roof; there were two internal grain pits (one of which was tripartite and covered by a roof supported by poles); and the unit possessed a further storage area divided into a system of silos connected by a ventilation channel.

A similar context lay *c*. 60 m to the east, immediately north-west of the 'secular' nucleus of power. This was articulated around a 'distinctive', well-built wooden house featuring stone slate roof slabs (until now an almost unique feature for the 8th century), characterised by a varied material culture but notably many food preservation jars. Other storage facilities (two distinct areas of grain pits and accommodation for large containers covered by a canopy and

a very well-preserved and only partially investigated storehouse) lay in direct connection to the dwelling, probably occupied by a blacksmith (Fronza 2015; La Salvia and Anguilano 2015). The workshop was set right next to the house; although so far only partially investigated, the base of an anvil and the surrounding workspace have been identified, together with a large area dedicated to iron smelting. Given the size of the village, this craftsman could hardly have made a living just from that community's needs; more likely he was a farmer who also engaged in ironworking at Miranduolo. His silos and grain pits, as well as the storehouse (preserving cereals, animal feed and iron ore), imply the accumulation of a surplus of foodstuffs from both direct farming and payment in kind for work carried out as a blacksmith.

In conclusion, we observe a pyramidal demographic composition at Miranduolo, comprising: two power nuclei (one probably ecclesiastical and one probably secular) at the top; farmers with a good wealth level (storage areas = more resources = more available land) in the middle; and at the bottom farmer families, whose houses were 'relegated' to a well-defined area of the village and were systematically equipped with a single grain pit to store their domestic supplies. I think that this picture can be translated into a society centred on two main landowners holding most of the productive land, followed by probably free farmers, maybe tenants or smallholders, able to secure fair incomes of foodstuffs and so requiring more articulated storage spaces; and below these were dependent peasants working for the two major landowners, depositing the fruit of their labours into the two main storage areas, and retaining only a small personal share.

(iii) A 9th-century defended manorial site

This well-defined village persisted into the early 9th century. Its subsequent evolution into a manorial estate impacted again on its design and economic orientation, but, above all, it wholly changed the established hierarchical social pyramid: the earlier rural households had possessed a certain capacity for action that enabled them to accumulate food reserves for their livelihoods, but this social category fell away in the 9th century, as evident from the diet of the farmers and from the total absence of food storage facilities inside or even

near the houses. The former large grain storage area on the western hillside was replaced by a burial ground linked to the church, the latter still timber-built, but with an enlarged plan and a new rectangular apse; some burials even part-reused the cutting of grain pits. While the graveyard marks a radical shift in the allocation of spaces in this area, the hilltop now emerges as the sole elite nucleus in the early 9th century and the only space for storage of foodstuffs (Fig. 21.6). The village church no longer formed an alternative focal point; instead it was included in what we might call the *pars dominica* (demesne) of the economic centre, separated from the rest of the settlement by a (recently traced) wooden palisade. Religious practice thus became strictly tied to the ruling family, who perhaps exploited this as their private chapel (a privileged burial is located right within the rectangular apse). This was the outcome of a long process of evolution of power in the village, culminating in the Frankish age with the emergence of a single dominant group.

Consequently, Miranduolo was heavily fortified: both hilltop and the slopes were in fact protected by two different palisades. The elite space of the hilltop, covering over 750 m2, saw further reinforcement through an impressive cutting of the bedrock to create two deep moats or ditches, delimiting it on both western and eastern sides. The distinctiveness of the elite complex was expressed also on other levels: the provision of associated storage and working/craft units (a blacksmith and a bone-working activity have been identified); material culture (showing, for example, a high availability of (well-dated) pottery with a good variety of classes and forms, even if almost entirely of local production – see Mariottini 2008; Mariottini and Salvadori 2012); diet (marked by a striking concentration of meat consumption within the elite spaces, especially if compared with the presence of animal bones in the other parts of the settlement – see Salvadori 2008); and the quality of the residential dwellings.

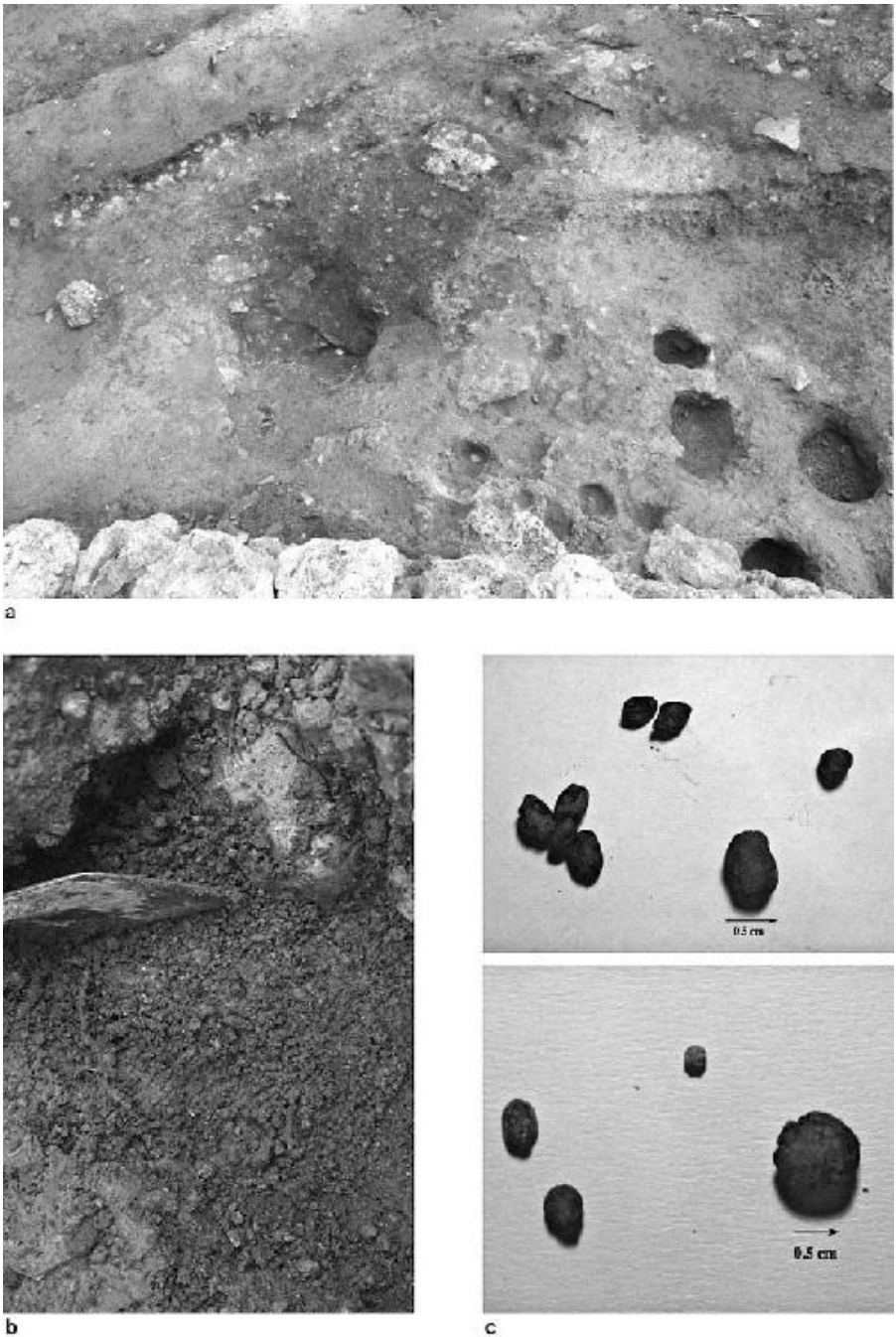

Figure 21.6. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – SI). One of the timber buildings interpreted as a granary on the hilltop storage area of the 9th-/10th-century manorial estate: (a) general view of the structure; (b) burnt earthen floor with carbonised cereals in context; (c) samples of carbonised seeds (Images: author).

The lower, second enclosure and the evident extension of the

village outside it (reaching the edges of the flat agricultural land on the hill's western side; several shovel test-pits and new trenching have recovered pottery here consistently pointing to a 9th- and 10th-century date) prompt a preliminary interpretation of a division of the overall settlement into: a *casa dominica* (the landlord's house located on the hilltop protected by the inner palisade); farmers who form part of the *dominicus* (occupying the higher slopes and terraces protected by the second and outer palisade); and a *pars massaricia* (the lower slopes and terraces and fields beyond the second enclosure) for which we currently have few secure clues for discerning the social nature of the families that inhabited it.

Certainly, however, this period reveals a clear trend towards a fairly closed economy and a radicalisation in the exploitation of peasant labour, with a significant process of resource accumulation and control. In practice, not only the core of the village was being protected, but also what were considered by the landlord as working 'tools' (i.e. the dependent peasants and the livestock).

(iv) A 10th-century castle

From the second half of the 10th century a new building phase occurs, marked primarily by the near-direct replacement of the palisade by an earthen wall with a timber framework set on stone foundations. This feature can be associated with the imposition of a castle or the site's transformation into a castle – a complex only attested by written sources, however, in AD 1004 as among the possessions of the Gherardeschi counts (the key written sources for Miranduolo are discussed in Zombardo 2008). Interestingly, no real disruption occurred to the settlement topography; indeed, the material boundary between the 9th-century manorial village and the 10th-century castle can hardly be seen. However, it appears that the outer, second enclosure was not rebuilt, meaning that the sides of the hill came to entirely represent the village. Yet, overall, the basic articulation of the settlement endured, and was even strengthened in this phase: peasants still relegated to their lower, often constricted spaces; and the castle taking the strongest, highest position as the sole focus of wealth/surplus management.

Apart from the application of different building techniques, the castle site conformed to the characteristics of the previous context in

terms of extent, articulation of space (including storage zoning), defence and demographics. This suggests that the castle did not yet represent the main entity of property identification, and that the *curtis* continued to be a strong and preponderant reality. Arguably, therefore, the land management approach did not suffer any shake-up; in other words, the economic role of the leading actors and of the spaces they occupied remained unchanged.

Ultimately, this trend does not seem to attest to the immediate assumption of a *dominatus loci* and the patrimonialisation of public rights. The excavations show how, from a site-planning and material perspective as well as in terms of the specific economic nature of the village (control over production and people), the transformations were essentially unimportant and superficial: the site persisted above all as an agricultural undertaking. The transition from *curtis* to castle at Miranduolo might not even have been perceived by the village population as a change: they continued to see the same spaces occupied by a fortified manor-house; their relationships of dependency from the landlord remained unaltered; and they kept on fulfilling the same obligations as before. In sum, the extensive archaeology of early medieval Miranduolo requires us to think more carefully about landscape, population and resource control and about the material manifestations of power and change.

Conclusion

With the late 10th century, when written sources begin to define these rural foci as castles, we can argue that there was in fact, for many of the regions explored above (and especially in Tuscany), no significant change in terms of site topography, planning and economic role. Identifying these trends has been the result of a long and fruitful discussion among Italian scholars (Valenti 2014), but it seems now clear that Pierre Toubert's castle revolution does not represent the process that determined the major transformation of settlement forms, economy and society in the rural areas. Rather, these changes were underway already in the 8th century and continued into the 9th century with an accentuated hierarchical pyramid and throughout the whole 10th century. The castle did not necessarily replace or re-define any village or economic aspect; nor did it make people more dependent on those landlords who 'promoted' and undertook the

incastellamento of already fortified centres, where power had often already been exercised steadily for many generations. If we want, we can talk about a 're-*incastellamento*', to be understood as a physical restructuring of existing centres of population, whose economic vocation did not change.

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22

Timber and Earth in the Architecture of Italian Early Medieval Fortified Sites (8th–10th Centuries AD)

Vittorio Fronza

Earthen and Timber Buildings in Early Medieval Italy: A Research Theme

The study of earthen and timber buildings is a relatively recent, but still poorly developed, field of research in Italian Medieval Archaeology, especially if compared to studies on fortified sites of the period. This failing is magnified by the fact – now widely accepted within the scientific community – that timber and other perishable materials were the predominant building medium in early medieval Italy, in both rural areas and urban contexts. Quantitatively and qualitatively the growing archaeological evidence supports this statement. Despite this, and in direct contrast with what has happened with studies of masonry buildings – namely the development of an independent discipline of 'archeologia dell'architettura' ('buildings archaeology'; see Brogiolo and Cagnana 2012) – the investigation of timber and earthen buildings has seen minimal take-up in Italian archaeological research in general or in early medieval archaeology specifically, except for a few exceptions (discussed in Fronza 2006, 539). Indeed, as a result of insufficient focused research, there has been no coherent effort to address issues in the data and the nature of the material evidence or to question the types and meanings of the architecture in earth and timber evident in Italy across the 4th–10th

centuries AD.

However, some effort has gone into the study of residential buildings ('edilizia residenziale') – a subject stimulated by G. P. Brogiolo in the 1980s, given more academic emphasis at a conference held in 1993 (Brogiolo ed. 1994), and developed in several recent essays (*e.g.* Brogiolo 2008); furthermore, early medieval residential architecture (in stone, *spolia*, timber) has been the subject of a valuable synthesis by Santangeli Valenzani (2011). Brogiolo's approach developed in parallel with studies on medieval housing conducted by Paola Galetti, mainly drawing on written sources but with special attention given to material evidence (Galetti 1985; 1997; 2001; 2004; 2006). These two period orientations came together a decade ago at a conference on *Residential Building between the 9th and 10th Century: History and Archeology* (Bologna, 2005) (Galetti 2010), providing a notable stimulus for further investigations.

Relevant are those works of synthesis that include perishable material buildings as one important functional marker of change, especially in relation to settlement studies (*e.g.* Brogiolo and Gelichi 1996; Brogiolo and Chavarria Arnau 2005; Francovich and Hodges 2003). Moreover, a recent conference has explored early medieval timber and earthen fortifications (Settia *et al.* 2013), although its emphasis overall lay with later, medieval examples (even though the 9th and 10th centuries are touched on in discussions).

Yet it is valid to claim that archaeologists who consider data on timber and earthen buildings as primary indicators for developing historiographical trends are few in number. A strong exception is formed by the Sienese research team (see observations in Valenti 2008b and the data sources for studying rural settlement trends in Tuscany in Valenti 2004), whose interest in 'perishable material architectures' is strongly demonstrated in the long-term research project named SREA (*Siti Rurali e Edilizia Altomedievale* – 'Rural sites and early medieval buildings'; see Fronza 2011, 100–107 for details). SREA began almost 20 years ago (Fronza and Valenti 1996), pursuing two interrelated paths: the study of timber and earthen buildings and the generation of an analytical atlas of early medieval rural settlements. Following a neo-processualist cognitive approach (Valenti 2012), at its base is a large dataset of published late antique and early medieval rural sites, managed within an elaborate database/GIS

system (Fronza 2005; 2009). Currently the database has compiled publication data up to 2006; after that date only selected information has been added (however, a major updating is planned).

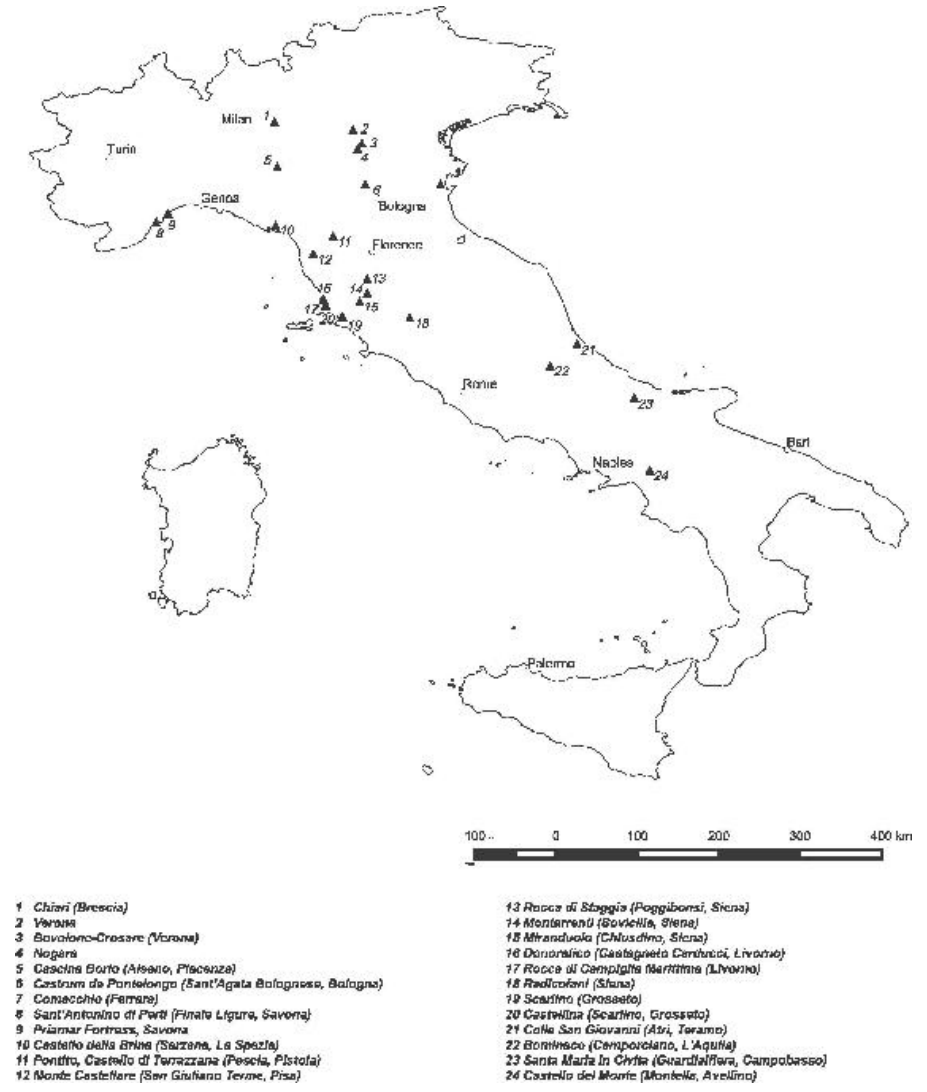

Figure 22.1. Map of Italy showing the key sites mentioned in the paper (Image by author).

In this phase of research by SREA, it is possible to highlight diverse thematic issues, such as those explored in this article. At present, the database has a total of 1015 records of Italian sites/ structures built in perishable materials, datable between the 4th–12th centuries AD, and referring to over 450 urban and rural archaeological sites; in total, this amounts to a minimum number of over 1400 single

recorded structures. Recent statistical evaluations have confirmed the validity of our sample (Fronza 2011, 107–113) for analytical purposes: importantly the sample does not seem particularly affected by issues related to the uneven distribution of archaeological research on the Italian Early Middle Ages, both chronologically (with higher concentrations at the two ends of the time-period) and spatially (with a predominance of quantitative and qualitative data for some regions, these almost exclusively located in the centre and the north of the peninsula).

A Numerical Overview

The recording and interpretive methods adopted for the SREA project rely heavily on the use of digital tools biased towards the production of statistical and spatial analysis. Before outlining some elementary numerical processing on timber fortifications, it should be specified that the quantitative elaborations, although important in the analytical phase, do not represent an exclusive (or even primary) research interest of our approach. Rather, they are to be understood as a source of basic information that, if applied rigorously but without over-reliance, can aid the interpretation of complex and composite datasets.

The sample under consideration here comprises 97 records, including cases of fencing used as property limits (*clausurae*), which, although their function is quite different and they are not strictly classifiable as fortifications, arguably have a close resemblance (in building techniques) with defensive palisades. If our sample is limited only to fortification works, then the total consists of 54 known occurrences; the majority of these relate to rural sites (the map in Figure 22.1 represents the main sites cited in this paper).

While some authors do not always provide a full description of their evidence, on the whole, information presented appears to be sufficiently reliable and, at least for a few key sites, quite detailed. Dating of these structures is mostly based on contextualised finds (primarily pottery, but also metals and glass). Radiocarbon analysis has been carried out in some cases but, in my opinion, C14 data can create problems in early medieval Italian contexts, especially since the calibrated results often give very large chronological forks (the higher confidence intervals are almost always greater than a century, and

occasionally up to two); in addition, the organic material of timber structures is not always perfectly reliable, mostly due to the heavy post-depositional processes, which are typical of these pluristratified sites. One way to obtain reliable information would be to have several radiocarbon samples relating to the same phases of a site, in order to statistically balance any inconsistencies; but such rarely happens. Fortunately, data for and dating of early medieval Italian ceramics are now strong and I am convinced that ceramic seriations are statistically still the best grounded chronological indicator. But this would be a long (and interesting) methodological discussion, which diverts us away from the subject of this paper.

Some descriptive statistical processing has been carried out on this dataset and is discussed below. As noted, these analyses offer fairly broad results and not solid conclusions. Nonetheless, the macro-data help to give a chronological distributive framework and to delineate the major trends involved, thereby providing a valuable starting point for assessing and understanding this type of early medieval fortification.

Figure 22.2 displays a straight diachronic distribution of all evidence types classified as fortifications and *clausurae* on a 50-year chronological interval basis. Though basic, it yields useful information on our sample: non-stone fortifications show a clear growth trend across the Early Middle Ages; the curve becomes steep (showing high growth) around the mid-8th century, when the start of the highest frequency chronological interval begins, coinciding neatly with the period under study here. A peak comes around *c*. AD 950, after which comes a steady then rapid decrease; by AD 1150 it has dropped to the same low numbers as the 5th century. The explanation of these trends lies in the historical processes, as will be seen.

With the second chart (Fig. 22.3), a correlation is established between all known perishable material features and the ones interpreted as fortifications. The core question here is: can we trace similarities or differences in the diachronic distribution of the two sets? In other words, is the diachronic trend of timber and earthen fortifications directly influenced by that of all perishable material buildings (prefiguring a construction-technique dependent distribution) or does it follow its own rules, while tied to more general historical processes (an independent or, more likely, a settlement

dynamics-dependent distribution)? In order to answer these questions I have charted the numerical difference (subtraction) between the fortifications frequency and that of all buildings, expressed as a percentage on the respective total occurrences in order to present comparable data. For example, looking at the graph, the value of approximately -10% attested for the first half of the 4th century AD signifies that at this period the percentage of fortifications then active (calculated on the total number of fortifications) is 10 points less than the percentage of all kind of buildings (calculated on the total number of all perishable material built structures). If the values of every time interval would be 0, the two curves would be identical while, crudely speaking, values lower than 0 indicate a smaller incidence of fortifications compared to the general trend of perishable material buildings and values higher than 0 indicate a larger incidence (each value is clearly related to a single 50-year interval).

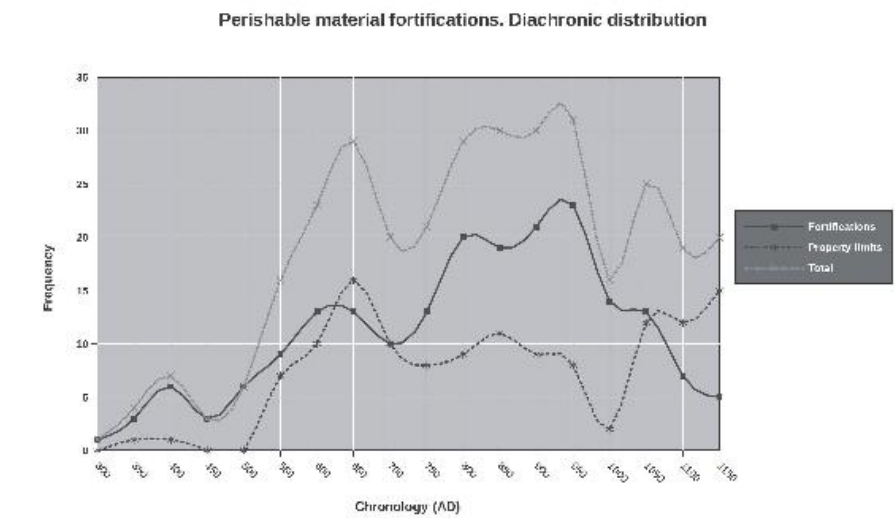

Figure 22.2. Diachronic distribution of perishable material fortifications in Italy (AD 400–1150).

The curve generated is interesting, in that it confirms that the concentration in the use of timber and earthen fortifications lies between *c*. AD 750–1050. Two peaks can be recognised: the early 9th century and the mid-10th. As explored below, these data in fact have convincing explanations in the settlement history of this period.

‘Perishable Material Fortifications’

The label ‘timber and earthen architectures of fortified sites’, reflected also in the title of this paper, refers to structures of clear defensive purpose – either for a whole site or for a specific part of the settlement – in which wood and/or earth (mostly clay matrix soils, more rarely tufaceous soils) are the exclusive, or characteristic, building material. We exclude here defences that are artificial modifications of the morphology of the ground, such as ditches or embankments.

Fortification works in Italy between the 8th and 10th century AD can effectively be divided into two large macro-typological groups or families, based on construction techniques: palisades or other structures made of posts planted directly in the ground (i) and circuits with timber or earthen walls set on masonry bases (ii).

The first macro-type comprises robust vertical poles set within postholes. We can distinguish various sub-typologies, mainly based around the layout of the posts and the mode/style of construction of the elevation. The simplest ones adopt the *Stabbau* technique: i.e. poles set tightly against each other to form a solid and very durable wall line. But construction methods can differ: thus, one category is represented by palisades with large posts arranged at a more or less regular distance (usually under 1.0 m apart, although occasionally spacing is wider); between them would have been set either horizontal wooden planks, wattle and daub walls or earthen (clay) walls. Sites with very marked defensive needs might feature palisades with doubled posts: i.e. posts are arranged in pairs (or as two approximately parallel rows), giving a greater thickness and stability to the fortification work. Spaces between these rows will have been filled by wattle and daub and/or earthen walls and perhaps in some cases with wood planking or boxing.

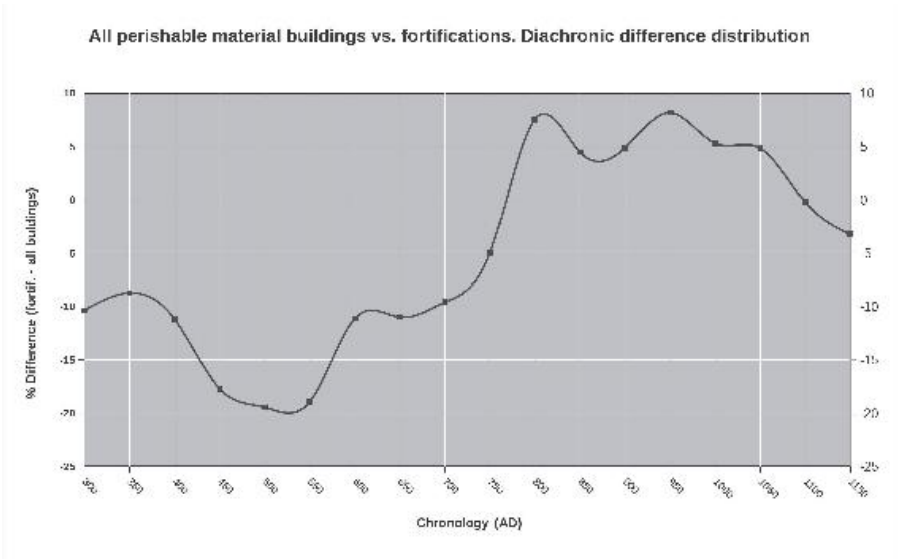
All perishable material buildings vs. fortifications. Diachronic difference distribution
% Difference (fortif. - all buildings)
Chronology (AD)

Figure 22.3. Diachronic distribution of the numerical differences between fortifications and all types of perishable materials buildings known in Italy (AD 400–1150), expressed in percentage of occurrences per time interval on the total.

The second 'family' is defined by fortifications with a masonry base, usually *c*. 0.5–1.0 m high, and a superstructure (*e.g.* palisade, rampart) in perishable materials. Architecturally, different types can again be recognised, essentially based on the combination of two primary criteria: the construction details of the stone footings and the building techniques of the superstructure. The footings/foundations are usually directly built on the ground surface (this often cleared down to bedrock), without any foundation trench. Walls are predominantly dry-set or earth- or clay-bonded, their stones either unworked or only roughly hewn, and their setting usually rather irregular; only rarely are there coherent horizontal or sub-horizontal courses with a more or less regular height, while small stones are frequently used to plug gaps between the irregular larger ones. The 'perishable' superstructure or elevation can be divided into two main categories: palisades of single-post form (the best represented on Italian sites); and earthen banks/walls without evident posts.

(i) Palisades

For the early medieval period, the numerically most conspicuous and best preserved instances of palisaded fortifications are all in central Italy and especially in Tuscany where, in recent decades, there have

been a number of important open-area research excavations on medieval rural hilltop sites (almost always identifiable as castles). Prominent is the evidence from the 1980s excavations at the castle of Montarrenti (Sovicille – prov. Siena; Cantini 2003), where several palisades enclosed the village, commencing in the 7th century. However, as will be seen, the available data on timber fortifications are often not particularly detailed and, for some sites, their presence is hypothesised on the basis of limited evidence, as for Radicofani (Avetta 1998), Monte Castellare at San Giuliano Terme (in the province of Pisa) (Manfredini *et al.* 1994) and the Rocca di Campiglia Marittima (prov. Livorno) (Bianchi 2003, 183 and fig. 21) (Fig. 22.4).

One issue relates to the conviction of archaeologists that such sites were defended in this period, as supported in the development of a strong settlement model for early medieval hilltop sites, based around a variety of important investigations (see examples below). But while we can now identify a clear trend, in terms of a growing concentration of power and of economic resources as well as a marked social hierarchisation from at least the 8th century AD, finding its apex during the 9th and 10th centuries and usually culminating with the *incastellamento* of these villages-estates (see Valenti, this volume), we should not assume that every upland site was fortified. Nonetheless, we can claim high confidence, on the basis of the extensive set of collected data, for the widespread use of timber fortifications. The evidence is sufficient to give insights into construction techniques and so to draw a sort of identikit of fortified settlements between the 8th and 10th centuries.

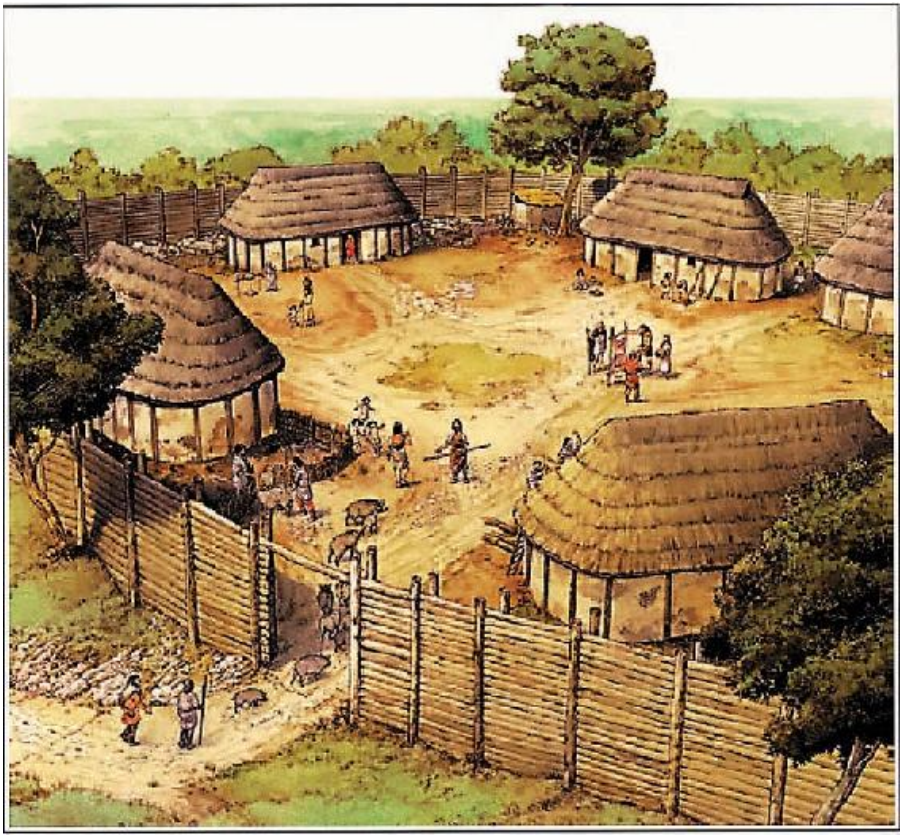

Figure 22.4. Campiglia Marittima (prov. Livorno). Reconstruction drawing of the 10th-century settlement enclosed by a palisade (Image from Bianchi 2003, 181, fig. 21).

We can commence with a major type-site, the castle of Miranduolo (Chiusdino – prov. Siena), under extensive excavation since 2001 and especially important for its exceptionally well preserved stratigraphic deposits, with many sealed beneath burnt layers marking the end of almost every settlement phase between the 8th and 10th/early 11th centuries. Miranduolo in fact has the highest number of perishable material contexts in Italy (at present more than 100 structures) (syntheses are in Valenti 2008a, 2008b, 2010b, 2013b and this volume; Fronza 2012a. Website with all excavation databases: http://archeologiamedievale.unisi.it/miranduolo).

The earliest stable occupation on the hill of Miranduolo dates to the 7th century, by when the territory was in Lombard control, marked by a productive context specialising in mining and in the reduction of iron ore (Fronza *et al.* 2012; La Salvia 2012). During the 8th century, the settlement underwent a radical transformation into a

village based on an agricultural economy, in which two nuclei of power are evident, together with a first important social articulation in a pyramidal form (Nardini 2012; Valenti 2013b). Both of these power foci were enclosed by palisades and contained extensive areas dedicated to storage of foodstuffs. By the 9th century a clear re-definition in the village's morphology occurs, signifying a new balance of power: the site was converted into a fortified village serving as the head of a manorial estate (*curtis*). Defences defined the lord's quarters on the hilltop and another set enclosed most of the elevation. The settlement continued also on the lower slopes of the hill and, at its apex, we can estimate a demographical potential of about 300–400 inhabitants (Valenti 2011, 3–4). The lordly control on labour force and on production means appears to be very strong in this period, on the site itself as well as on the surrounding agricultural and silvopastoral land. The manorial village was transformed into a timber-built castle towards the late 10th century (the first mention comes in AD 1004, when the site belonged to the Gherardeschi family). Finally, during the second half of the 11th century, the stone castle was erected, although this was destroyed in the wake of struggles between the Gherardeschi and the bishop of Volterra, between the late 1120s and early 1130s. Miranduolo then began a slow but inexorable decline, falling into abandonment in the first half of the 14th century.

Figure 22.5. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – prov. Siena). Reconstruction drawing of the building with 9th-/10th-century palisade (Image by Studio InkLink – Florence, Italy).

For the 9th-/10th-century village/manorial estate, two separate palisades existed: one, only partially identified, completely surrounded the terraced slopes of the upper part of the hill, enclosing what can be considered as the *pars dominica* of the *curtis*; the second defensive curtain, girded by two deep ditches, fortified the highest part of the hill, to be read as the *casa dominica*. The well-preserved stratigraphy at the latter enabled detailed analysis of the construction technique (Fig. 22.5): this palisade comprised a considerable number of posts (over 210 have been dug), mostly of elm or oak, usually stripped of bark and only rarely squared; technically and qualitatively, this work surpasses the construction work on the terraced slopes below (Fronza 2008). A sequence of very robust poles (average diameter of postholes: 0.4–0.5 m, but with some up to 0.7 m) lay close together, sometimes contiguous, but usually spaced 20–60 cm apart. The best preserved portions of the fortification show a frequent transversal doubling of the posts – a feature observed discontinuously over the whole perimeter, but more regular on the better explored southern and western sides (Fig. 22.6). The spaces between the double posts featured wattle and daub walls with a consistent clay plaster coating. Along the southern side, several carbonised structural elements have

been examined, identifying remains of elm posts around which was a framework of intertwined branches (mainly of ash wood). Some powder layers sealed the wood charcoal macro-remains and these can be interpreted as detached remains of a lime coating applied to the posts and wattling.

One notable finding lay on the inner part of the fortification's south-eastern corner, where two quadrangular structures were recognised. Modest in size and located on both sides of a wide area free of posts, these can probably be interpreted as the main entrance onto the hilltop area, protected by two small wooden towers or elevated platforms embedded in the palisade – a type of fortification almost unknown to Italy (but central and northern European comparisons are cited in Valenti 2010a, 8; see also other papers in the present volume). This defended entrance configures a component of monumentality which is reinforced by the presence of the very large and deep double ditches noted above. Potentially this design mirrors the image that the landlord wanted to convey of himself, besides representing a wider context of insecurity and the need for elites to protect themselves, their goods and their main production means.

At the Rocca di Staggia (Poggibonsi – prov. Siena), where the investigated area is much smaller, the sequence of early medieval defence essentially follows that for Montarrenti and Miranduolo, but differs in having an early masonry circuit wall that co-exists for a long time with wooden and mixed materials fortification elements (Fronza and Valenti 2006; Causarano *et al.* 2007; Francovich and Valenti 2007). The earliest settlement phase, from the first half of the 8th century to the late 9th, features a strong palisade delimiting the higher, presumably privileged part of the village; horizontal wooden planks or earthen walls likely ran between the vertical posts. A second, less substantial palisade, more fence-like, extended perpendicular to this main one, internally dividing the hilltop plateau. Around *c.* AD 900 the main palisade was replaced by a strong masonry wall that remained in use until the late 13th century; and around the mid-10th century, there is a wider shift to a construction technique combining stone and timber elements.

Figure 22.6. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – prov. Siena). Doubled posts building technique of the 9th-/10th-century palisade: example from the western side of the hilltop (Image: author).

The settlement trend so far delineated for the Sienese excavations is applicable to several other sites in the region. Effectively this has led to the drafting of the so-called 'Tuscan model', now universally recognised by the international scientific community and characterised by a long and complex formation process of the early medieval village, that often (but not always) culminates in the transformation of hilltop sites into castles towards the end of the Early Middle Ages (Valenti 2004; 2009; 2013a; a step-by-step explanation of how the 'Tuscan model' developed over the last 25 years is offered in Valenti 2014).

Several other sites seem to fit to this model, among them the castle of Scarlino (prov. Grosseto; see Farinelli and Francovich 2000, 45–60; Marasco 2002–03; Valenti 2004, 56–59) with rather uncertain evidence of a palisade (Francovich *et al.* 1997, 98) and the castle of Donoratico (Castagneto Carducci – prov. Livorno; see Bianchi 2004 and Bianchi *et al.* 2011) where a limited stretch of a double-rowed palisade dating from the mid-8th century was identified (Pistolesi 2004).

In northern Italy, data on non-masonry fortifications show up several peculiarities, albeit maintaining trends in common with the contexts of central Italy. However, some notable sites in the lowlands of the inner and eastern Po valley present closely comparable features and can be considered as a distinctive settlement type, a sort of a counterpoint to the central Italian hilltop sites. One of the main characteristic traits of these northern sites is their location in areas of navigable rivers and/or swamplands. Among these, the *castrum Ponte Longi* in Sant'Agata Bolognese, mentioned in a document of AD 992 (Gelichi *et al.* 2014), has substantial remains of an early medieval settlement, whose first occupation phase dates to the 9th century and comprises an unfortified village-manorial estate with timber buildings. Its next phase corresponds to the imposition of a 10th-century castle, with the settlement girded by a palisade of massive oak posts, protected by a ditch and embankment. The settlement's centre of power, probably linked to the monastery of Nonantola, was set outside these fortifications and resembled a motte.

In the lowlands south of Verona there are two fortified sites that have yielded some of the currently richest data on settlement dynamics of this period in northern Italy. At Bovolone-Crosare, large-

scale investigation (over a hectare in extent) identified a substantial settlement founded during the 9th century (Saggioro *et al.* 2004). By *c.* AD 900 comes a development phase in which the fortified area occupied 6–7 (loosely settled) hectares. A palisade, perhaps integrated in some stretches with a stone wall, at least part-enclosed the settlement and created a fortified space containing residential buildings, auxiliary structures and productive features (especially related to metallurgical activities).

The castle of Nogara was founded in the early 10th century as a result of an imperial concession (Saggioro *et al.* 2001; Saggioro 2011). In this the *castrum* is presented as endowed with ditches and embankments defended by wooden structures, such as small forts (*bertische*) and other unspecified features (*propugnacula*). Although not expressly mentioned by the written sources and not identified archaeologically, we should expect a palisade existed, given the mention of battlements (perhaps wattle screens crowning the defences?). Elsewhere we can cite Chiari (prov. Brescia; Venturini 2013), featuring a 9th-century palisade of substantial stakes (the main postholes are of constant diameter *c.* 0.5 m) alternating with smaller ones; and Cascina Borio of Chiaravalle (Alseno – prov. Piacenza; see Miari 2008, 196–197) with the corner of its palisade traced.

Traces of palisades also occur south and west, in areas of Byzantine tradition, before and after the Lombard conquest under King Rothari in AD 643. Perhaps the best known case is the *castrum Pertice* at Sant'Antonino di Perti (Finale Ligure – prov. Savona), dated to between the second half of the 6th century and the 7th (Mannoni and Murialdo 2001). This is an important example of a planned fortification, clearly part of the Ligurian defensive system during the Byzantine period. The oldest settlement phase features a palisade that precedes the walls of the late 6th or early 7th century.

Other, later Ligurian sites can be noted. Between the end of the 8th and 10th centuries, for example, after a temporary abandonment of the area following Rothari's conquests, on the Priamàr hill in Savona a *castrum* was built, re-occupying the pre-Roman settlement focus (Varaldo 1992 and 2000). The archaeological evidence indicates buildings on stone foundations (earth-/clay-bonded), together with a high number of postholes: these relate to an early medieval village, directly obliterating a mid-4th- to mid-7th-century burial ground. A

small bedrock-cut trench has been interpreted as evidence of a wooden palisade belonging to a first fortification of the early medieval *castrum*, which was replaced during the second half of the 10th century, likely during the Saracen incursions, by a massive stone circuit wall. Different is the case of *castrum Brinae* (castle of Brina, Sarzana – prov. La Spezia) which recalls the settlement trends of the Tuscan sites rather than those of northern Italy: after a first phase starting in the late 7th century, during the 9th century the site becomes a manorial centre fortified by a palisade of coupled posts. Around *c*. AD 900 a second and inner palisade was built to enclose the small hilltop spaces probably to be identified as the centre of power (Baldassarri *et al*. 2008; Baldassarri and Parodi 2011). The timber fortifications are replaced by a stone wall only during the 11th century.

Finally in this section, we can cite the few known southern Italian cases of perishable material defensive features. Generally, these regions witnessed a longer survival of the use of masonry building techniques from later classical times than in central and northern contexts. Hence, data on timber fortifications are quite rare. In part this could relate to the relatively limited number of specific investigations on early medieval contexts carried out in this part of the peninsula, but this cannot be the sole/main reason for their scarce diffusion. As a fairly recent statistical analysis was able to show, there is no straight geographical correlation in the ratio between the total number of known perishable material buildings and the total number of known sites of each region/province. In other words, if we take the average number of buildings per site on a regional basis as a comparable index, the use of perishable materials in constructions still appears to be generally less common in southern Italy (Fronza 2011, 107–111). Certainly on some sites there is relatively clear evidence of timber enclosures, as at the castle/monastery of Bominaco (Caporciano – prov. L'Aquila) where wooden buildings probably lay within a palisade (Staffa 1992; Pannuzi and Staffa 1994). And in the 9th century the long-term settlement of Santa Maria in Civita (Guardialfiera – prov. Campobasso; Barker *et al*. 1980; Barker 2001, 285–295; Bowes and Hodges 2002) can be viewed as an unusually large, centralised, fortified village, with evidence of a palisade on the hillside overlooking the valley; strong walls were traced on the

opposite side, thus creating an interesting case of seeming co-existence of the two construction techniques. A slightly earlier context has been identified at the Castello del Monte near Montella (prov. Avellino; Rotili 2011; Ebanista 2012). Here, the 6th-/7th-century hilltop settlement, with timber buildings set on masonry footings, was probably defended by a double palisade: one enclosing the highest part of the settlement and the other the rest of the hilltop (see Rotili and Pratillo 2010, fig. 2 for a reconstruction). The timber fortification continued into the 8th-century phase, when the site is attested as a *curtis* in a text of Duke Arechis II dating to 762; it was replaced by a stone circuit as early as the 9th century.

(ii) 'Mixed materials' fortifications

Defensive elements combining stone and perishable building material – usually with a masonry base and elevations of wood and/or earth – and commonly called 'mixed material' construction, have already been mentioned. This building technique is not limited to fortifications (which, in fact, form a small percentage of all known cases), but has a widespread diffusion across the peninsula for all types of structures and especially for dwellings. It often marks a transitional phase between constructions entirely made of perishable materials and those of masonry. Chronologically the building type spans the whole early medieval period, experiencing particular peaks in the 6th–7th centuries and in the 10th century.

The general trend of its chronological distribution is revealed in Figure 22.7 (the 'All buildings' line), where all mixed materials buildings in our database are diachronically compared to mixed materials fortifications (values are expressed in percentage of the single time interval occurrences on the total occurrences, in order to be comparable). The resulting curves allow a few considerations. First of all, there is again no coincidence between the two series, meaning that fortifications follow their own trend. In particular, they show a growing but relatively low incidence (which in our case signifies a lower presence of the fortified structures in relation to all mixed material buildings) until the 9th century. The peak can be placed in the 10th century, when the fortifications have a clearly higher statistical frequency, especially if compared to the general plot of the mixed materials building type. In fact, the curves cross already during

the second half of the 8th century, but the greatest gap between the two occurs during the first half of the 10th century, signifying a higher incidence of fortifications within the mixed material building type in this period.

These trends are confirmed in well-investigated contexts. In fact, there are several known cases in the literature of mixed material fortifications, almost all of which relate to central Italy. Again the clearest evidence comes from Miranduolo: those walls enclosing only the hilltop during the first phase of *incastellamento* (from the final quarter of the 10th to first quarter of the 11th century), replacing the previous palisade destroyed by a fire, represent one of the best preserved structures of this type so far excavated (Valenti 2008a, 167–172; Fronza 2008). At a structural level, the posts were directly set in the masonry base, forming the framework of the higher parts of the fortification, which were covered with a thick layer of plaster. The construction technique is quite homogeneous (with some differences described below), while the foundations comprise roughly hewn limestone and rubble stone of medium and small size, fairly irregularly set. The key features occur on the northern and southern sides of the hilltop, in considerably different stratigraphic contexts.

On the northern side the best preserved portion serves as the foundation for the later, mid-11th-century circuit walls. This is the only segment of the mixed materials wall that appears to be lime mortar-bonded, although in several points the evidence is limited. On the southern side, the deposits show the more typical composition (Fig. 22.8); in particular, excellent stratigraphic conditions at the south-eastern corner of the circuit enabled close reading of the technical construction details and recognition of a probable secondary access (Fig. 22.9). The stone base was between 0.40 and 1.15 m in width, with 5–6 rows of fairly regular courses of roughly worked stones bonded by gray earth mixed with gravel. Several round and quadrangular postholes were detected on this. Almost 20 carbonised macro-remains of considerable size were recovered from a burnt layer and can be interpreted as structural elements of the defence's timber superstructure. Of particular interest is a large sample of wood belonging to a vertical post (Fig. 22.10): of dimensions 80 cm long, 20 cm wide and 10 cm thick, part of its pointed end survived, with fragments of a cork oak bark lining, probably as a protective

waterproofing. The evidence, so far unique, indicates a refined construction technique and confirms intimate understanding by the villagers of local wood types, their uses and applications.

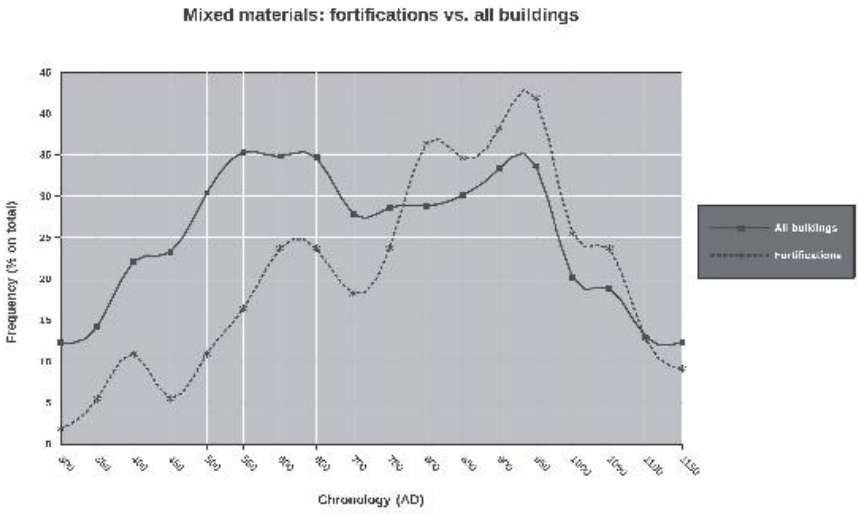

Figure 22.7. Diachronic distribution of 'mixed materials' architectures in Italy (AD 400–1150), with a comparison between fortifications and all 'mixed materials' buildings, expressed in percentage of occurrences per time interval on the total.

Proceeding westwards, a very similar stretch of E–W stone foundation was traced on a lower terrace, running parallel to the previously described foundation, forming a sort of 'corridor' *c*. 1.0 m wide: this delineates a transversal access to the castle, from S–N, through a passage that could be passed through only on foot (Fig. 22.9).

Earthen walls will have been set over the stone foundations and between the vertical posts. Some sections of these were still *in situ* or preserved directly on the masonry base. Interestingly, evidence of an external coating was traced as collapse immediately outside the southern side of the wall: two large pieces of burnt lime plaster, 4–8 cm thick, covered an area of *c*. 2.0 × 0.80 m. The lime may have been generated by a small mortar machine, sited on the eastern part of the hilltop. As well as providing a strengthening to the walling, the lime plaster could also have acted as a visual marker to the defended zone.

Elsewhere, comparable examples include: the Castellaccio of Terrazzana (Pescia – prov. Pistoia), where the first phase of the small

settlement, probably dating to the 9th–10th centuries, was enclosed by a palisade on a stone base (Quiros Castillo 1998, 183; 1999, 51–74; Milanese 1995); Scarlino (prov. Grosseto), where, during the 10th century, the palisade was replaced by a thick circuit wall of unworked stone bonded by earth, for which Valenti (2004, 45) has convincingly proposed a possible interpretation as a stone base with a perishable material upper part; and Castellina, located in the Maremma lowlands in the Scarlino district, occupying a slight elevation of land of diameter *c*. 70 m, where recent investigations (Marasco 2013) point to a settlement dating to between the 9th and 10th centuries, probably a lord's seat or *curtis* controlling both land and productive resources; it was enclosed by a circuit wall with stone and lime foundations, most likely completed by an earthen wall elevation. Finally, at Colle San Giovanni (Atri – prov. Teramo), a palisade set on a stone foundation has been identified (Staffa 2000, 78–79; 2001, 165–167; 2005, 93–96); the feature, probably completed by an earthen wall set between the posts, is dated between the 7th–9th centuries.

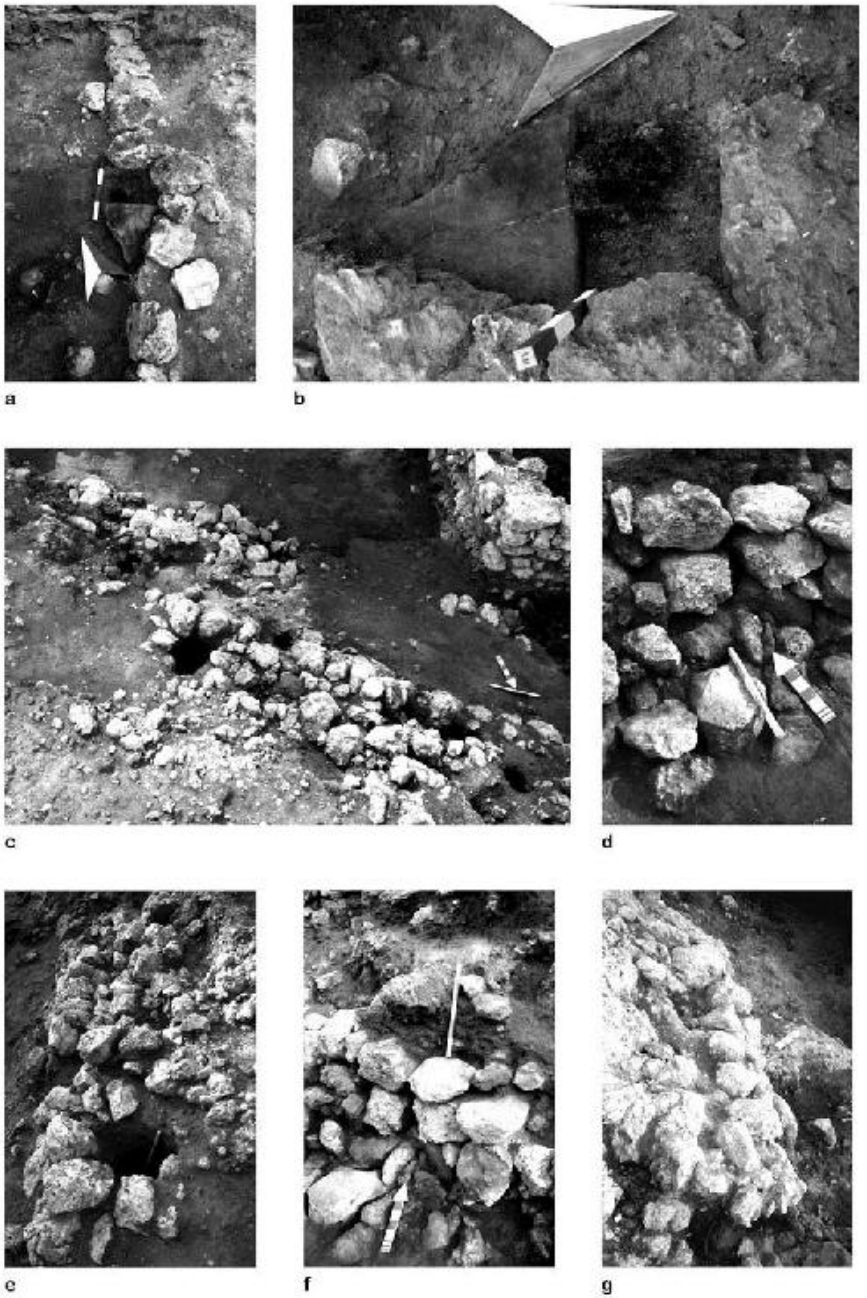

Figure 22.8. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – prov. Siena), southern side of the hilltop. Masonry bases belonging to the 'mixed materials' fortification (late 10th–early 11th century): a) general view of the eastern portion; b) detail of a posthole set in the eastern part of the stone foundation; c) general view of the south-eastern portion; d, e) details of the south-eastern portion; f, g) details of the south-western portion (Images: author).

Figure 22.9. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – prov. Siena), southern side of the hilltop. Secondary entrance through the 'mixed materials' defences (late 10th–early 11th century) (Image: author).

Main Trends: Conclusions

It should first be stressed how fortifications largely built in perishable materials represent the absolutely dominant defensive form for Italian rural settlements between the 8th–10th centuries; stone-built fortification walls appear rare in the extreme unless a direct reuse of a late Roman defensive complex (*e.g.* Castelseprio). Second, and perhaps most notable, is the basic uniformity of the non-stone built defences – a homogeneity that has its roots deep in the historic processes of early medieval village formation and is reflected above all in the morphology of the fortified sites and in the expressions of building techniques.

Elements of this uniformity, from a settlement morphology perspective, are primarily the constant presence of palisades, often preceded by ditches, these sometimes of notable proportions. *Aggeri* and embankments, on the other hand, are much less well attested (partly because, of course, many fortified settlements occupy hilltops). The important group of sites located in the Po plain deviates from this trend for obvious environmental reasons: here, the relationship with water and wetlands becomes central and besides the presence of

embankments to create platforms on which to place the settlements (with a dual function of facilitating defence and protecting against floods), there are two elements that become crucial indicators for this settlement type, namely the digging of canals to regiment the floodlands and the proximity to waterways.

Rare elements in the archaeological record are supporting defensive structures: wooden towers are attested in very few cases and do not seem, at least in the current state of research, to be a common trait of fortified sites – though, as with recent finds of timber churches (see for example, Fronza 2012b for the case of Miranduolo), I am convinced that more exhaustive and large-scale excavations, particularly in correspondence to later masonry, fortified buildings, could be rewarding, given the evident functional continuity that often marks the use of these spaces.

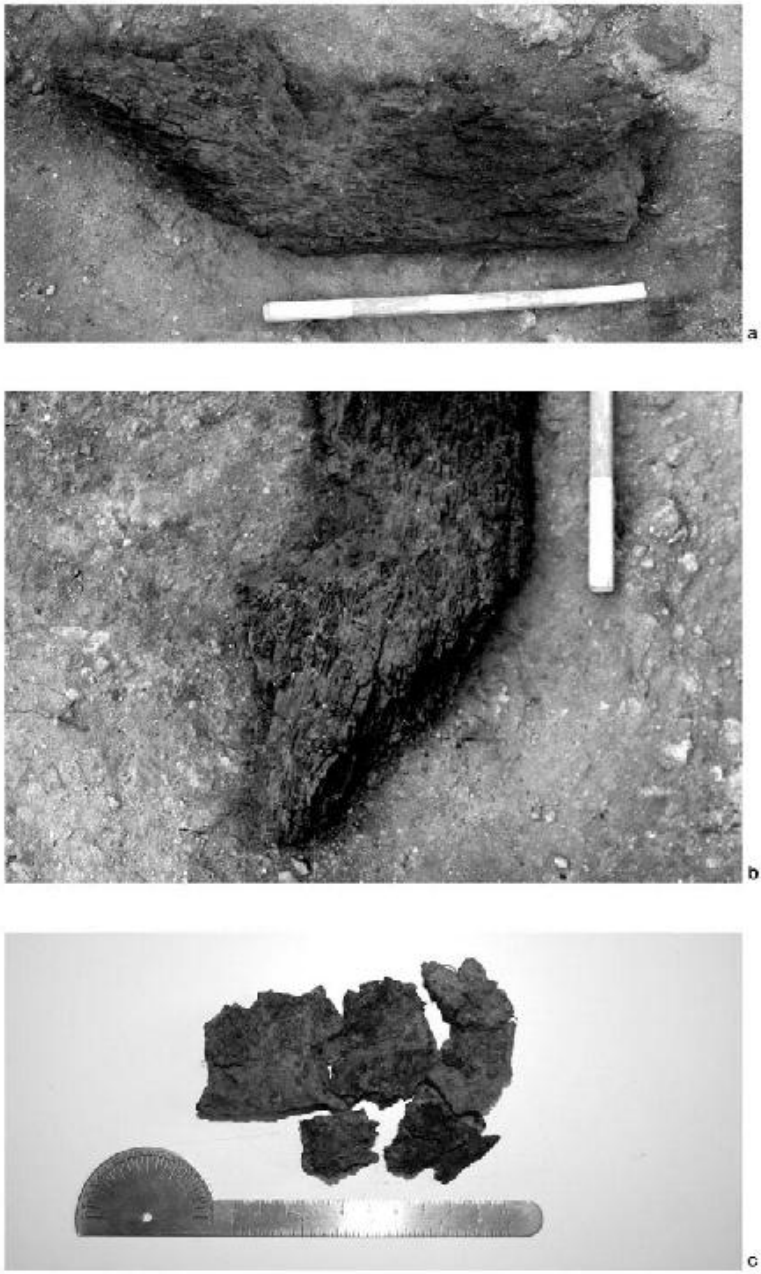

Figure 22.10. Miranduolo (Chiusdino – prov. Siena), southern side of the hilltop. Well-preserved pointed end of an oak-wood post belonging to the 'mixed materials' defences (late 10th–early 11th century): a, b) general and detailed view of the context; c) corkwood bark fragments coating the tip of the post (Images: author).

From a technical viewpoint, the *Stabbau* with vertical posts

adjacent to each other – perhaps the most widespread palisade type in Europe – is attested in Italy on a limited scale; cases in which an array of juxtaposed postholes is clearly recognised and interpreted as a continuous wall are quite rare, while spaced alignments of posts with various techniques forming the walls (wattle and daub, horizontal timber frames, earthen walls) are more frequent. Palisades with double posts forming two more or less regular lines leaving a small space between them appear a quite distinctive type. Despite being essentially a variant of the two main typologies, it features strongly in the hilltop sites of central Italy and especially of Tuscany; here it appears a fairly reliable indicator of a specific historical process.

In fact, for most of early medieval Tuscany, it seems clear that the presence of timber fortifications should be interpreted as a direct result of a general re-organisation of hilltop settlements under the direct pressure of a new landowning élite; in re-shaping the means and processes of agricultural production, we witness a centralisation of all strategic economic activities and of structures for storage and accumulation of foodstuffs. These efforts are almost always directed towards the formation of villages, in which we can at least in part identify expressions of the manorial system. This marks a key moment in the formation and establishment of aristocracies in the landscape and the fortification of upland settlement spaces is one of the most important indicators of this process.

And for northern and central Italy especially, these physical changes often represent a well structured step towards the formation of the castles. *Incastellamento* itself, in its many evident or subtle variations, is a process which is accomplished in most cases within the 10th century, often without changing significantly the élite's economic strategies nor, as a direct consequence, the village morphology including its defensive systems.

More widely, at a topographic-functional level all these early medieval fortifications (both palisades and 'mixed material' features) are related to a re-organisation of the settlement forms, marked by more pronounced planning and a progressive social hierarchisation aimed at imposing new or tighter economic and productive regimes. This is a major factor that distinguishes palisades of the timespan under scrutiny from those of earlier or later periods.

Also notable is the seemingly complete absence of perishable

material fortifications in urban contexts. As noted recently (Cirelli 2013, 136), the form of urban defences remained substantially unmodified after the late Roman/antique period and only rarely have we clear evidence of early medieval works or changes. Exceptions include the noted Priamàr hill in Savona and Verona, where written sources referring to AD 837 mention a timber palisade added to the city ditch (Brogiolo 2011, 99). One might also include the *emporium* of Comacchio in the province of Ferrara, a potential Byzantine new town/*castrum*, whose episcopal complex was girded by an embankment with palisade between the 9th and 11th centuries (Brogiolo 2011, 129–130; see Gelichi, this volume).

The uniformity of building fortifications that has so far been stressed breaks down on some levels during the final part of our chronological fork, when diverse types start appearing more frequently. But this transformation is valid not only for defensive structures but for all architectures. While we must be careful not to generalise, it is equally true that, from the north to the centre of the peninsula, new building types do characterise the final part of the Early Middle Ages. In particular, fortifications on stone foundations are key features of this transition phase. Indeed, while residential buildings on masonry substructures are widely attested more or less everywhere, fortifications with the same technique belong almost exclusively to hilltop sites of central and southern Tuscany. Here they become one of the indicators that guide scholars in further articulating the material transformations that mark the passage from villages serving as economic control centres (often in the form of manorial estates) to castles.

In the north of Italy, sill-beamed structures have a dominant place in residential architectures (as in the cited cases of Sant'Agata Bolognese, Bovolone, and Nogara, plus many other sites besides), but, curiously, the process traced in central Italy with stone foundation circuit walls does not happen here: the sill-beamed construction technique, at least from what is currently known, is never used for defensive structures. It is hard to say whether the reason is structural (*e.g.* reduced strength for features with a timber sill), related to resources, or if it is to be sought elsewhere. In any case it remains a striking feature yet to be explained.

A final observation concerns the relationship between building

techniques and settlement dynamics: despite the changes discussed for the former, the 10th century does not witness a corresponding evolutionary process in the latter. Village morphology mostly remains close to that of the immediately preceding phases, thereby indicating a clear continuity in the socio-economic background. In Tuscany, this period corresponds often to the very early stages of *incastellamento*, as attested by documentary sources for many of the sites named above. But, as Valenti also shows (this volume), the transition between the village/manorial estate and the castle is primarily a juridical question that, at least in this early stage, does not seem to have had important reflections on the settlements' materiality. In this context, the same changes we witness in building techniques (for Tuscany, from palisades to mixed material enclosures) must be read simply as the replacement of one indicator of uniformity with another no less evident one.

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23

Fortified and Unfortified Settlements in Byzantine and Islamic Sicily: 6th to 11th Centuries

Alessandra Molinari

Introduction

One notable fact to stress from the very outset is that, for the entire period under consideration (coinciding with both the Byzantine and Islamic dominations of Sicily), the creation of defended communities, particularly in rural contexts, was not a large scale phenomenon in any part of the island. In early medieval Sicily the creation of impregnable and isolated 'eagles' nests' is a romantic but unfounded supposition. In any case, during this period, the construction of fortifications did not necessarily lead to a 'revolution of the habitat'. This notion, first put forward by Pierre Toubert (1973) in his hugely influential thesis on Latium and which became central to the emergent debate about *incastellamento*, has been questioned in other parts of Italy (see *Archeologia Medievale* XXXVII, 2010). We should also bear in mind that while Sicily was undergoing important social, political and cultural changes, for our timeframe it remained dependent on a tax-based State; most probably the island did not experience the establishment of seigneurial forms of power until after the arrival of the Normans (for a summary, see Molinari 2010 and 2014). Across the 6th to 11th centuries, the settlement patterns in Sicily underwent profound transformations, and yet insecurity and emergency defence never seem to have been the driving force behind them. The picture of

how rural habitats evolved is emerging with increasing clarity both from field surveys and systematic excavations, aided by improving recognition of the chronologies of the island's early medieval ceramics. The archaeology of those towns that have always retained an urban character, by contrast, is mainly based on rescue excavations, making any synthesis on this theme problematic. Hence the focus here is on rural changes in early medieval Sicily.

Past scholarship has pointed mainly to the 7th and 8th centuries as the period of rupture with late antique settlement patterns (characterised by the presence of *villae* and *vici*), coinciding with the first Muslim raids and later attempts at conquest (especially in 740 – see Chiarelli 2011, 13–19). The view was that this emergency situation led to a spontaneous population shift towards refuges and fortified sites, as well as a strong investment by the Byzantine State in erecting new fortresses or reinforcing old sites (*e.g.* Cracco Ruggini 1978; Maurici 1992). According to H. Bresc (1994), another reason for *incastellamento* was the protracted Islamic conquest of the island, which began in 827 but was only fully complete in the early 10th century; thus when the Normans appeared on the scene (starting in 1061) a process of *decastellamento* was initiated: those who were defeated (mostly Arabo-Muslims) were transferred to new, open and undefended settlements, while the victors (Latin Christians) took possession of the fortified sites. Another subject of considerable discussion is the rescript of 967, reported by al-Nuwayri (BAS, II, 546) and issued by the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz, with precise instructions to the emir of Sicily, Ahmad. In brief, the Caliph ordered that the population of the island should no longer live in scattered fashion in the countryside, but should gather in fortified centres endowed with cathedral mosques. This rescript may in part be interpreted as a Fatimid reaction to the Byzantine re-conquest, but it has also been seen as indicating a desire to upgrade the island's fiscal and administrative efficiency, to complete the process of Islamisation and to ensure loyalty to the Fatimid dynasty (see Chiarelli 2011, 108–109). Thus, implementation of this rescript is thought to have brought an end to most dispersed settlements, resulting in the presence of military garrisons inside the district capitals. Archaeological evidence for the rescript's effectiveness (or lack thereof) is, as will be seen, a controversial issue.

From the 1980s archaeological research greatly intensified and a body of data is available to us today that, in my view, offers a quite different image from what until recently could be drawn from the scant literary sources and from sometimes questionable readings of the toponomy (see, for example, Uggeri 2010). We need here to take a fresh look at these results, in a way that does not consider motives of defensive emergency as an inevitability (while not underestimating them) nor indulges in other kinds of social or cultural determinism (as has sometimes been done for other areas, like al-Andalus). Intensive excavations have been carried out at hilltop sites that feature important antique phases (*e.g.* Iato, Entella, Segesta, Rocchicella di Mineo), at elevated sites with phases that are predominantly medieval (such as Monte Kassar, Brucato, Calathamet, Castellaccio di Campofiorito), and at various kinds of undefended sites (including Villa del Casale/Piazza Armerina, Sofiana, Kaukana, Contrada Colmitella, Milocca, Contrada Saraceno, Calliata); to these can be added numerous systematic surveys (see contributions in Nef and Ardizzone eds, 2014 with bibliographies).

Below I will first aim to summarise the settlement trends evident in different sections of the island. I will then illustrate several case studies in which intensive excavation work has been accompanied by extensive investigation – in particular, studies in the area of Agrigento, Entella, Castronovo di Sicilia, Monte Iato, Segesta and Monti del Trapanese, Sofiana and Villa del Casale near Piazza Armerina (Fig. 23.1). From these I will review what I consider the principal trends, based also on the views of the new historiography of Byzantine and Islamic Sicily. Finally, in the concluding section, the possible linkages between social structures and forms of settlement will be highlighted.

Before interrogating the case of Sicily several points must be stressed which I see as indispensable for a better understanding of what different settlement phenomena here mean. Today any study of the creation of fortified sites cannot be undertaken without a more general analysis of the surrounding territorial context. Defining the various types of protected settlements (i.e. purely military fortifications, seigneurial residences, defensive enclosures, fortified granaries, protected peasant villages, etc.) is especially important if we wish to uncover who were the possible promoters of these places

and who later benefitted from them, whether public powers, local seigneuries or peasant communities, and to question what kind of reciprocal relationships existed.

An Overview

After a period of drastic reduction in the number of rural settlements during the 5th century, the 6th and 7th centuries, coinciding with the first phase of Byzantine domination, appear fairly stable (for a recent summary of the data on these centuries, see Cacciaguerra *et al.* 2015). The Sicilian countryside seems to have featured several large village settlements (which we might call *vici*) which had been in existence from at least as early as the 4th century and which often tended to retain their semi-urban features (namely an extension often of more than 4 hectares, evidence of substantial non-agricultural production activities, thermal buildings, etc.). Most of these 'agglomerated' sites are to be found along the main roads, in the most fertile inland areas near river valleys but also in coastal locations. The material culture of these places is rather complex (even in the interior regions of the island), with a noticeable presence of imported ceramics (North African and, to a lesser extent, Oriental amphorae, African *terra sigillata*, and cooking wares from Pantelleria), but with the 7th century marked by an increase in local ceramics. Monetary circulation also appears to be at significant levels, while the necropoleis and epigraphic material suggest a fairly complex social structure. The presence of churches (commencing mostly in the 5th century), sometimes endowed with mosaic floors and renovated at various times, is a recurring phenomenon. By contrast, the quality of private construction in these sites during the 6th and 7th centuries is still not well known. Nonetheless, a wide use of recycled building materials and the re-adaptation of pre-existing structures, the increasingly frequent presence of earth/clay mortars and simpler floor plans, are regular features at these places. Currently, no defensive or boundary walls have been identified with any certainty at any of these settlements, although a perimeter wall has been hypothesised for Villa del Casale (see below). These settlement nuclei, although important centres for their respective territories, do not therefore appear to present the features of 'defended' communities. Instead, this latter characteristic appears applicable exclusively to the urban centres

located on the coast which were usually diocesan centres. Urban centres in the east of the island (foremost among them Syracuse and Catania) appear to have persisted longer than those in the north-west, where Palermo gained in prominence (Pringent 2013).

The 8th and 9th centuries are the most complex to interpret but do mark the period when the most noticeable changes to settlement patterns in Sicily occur. Until fairly recently the disappearance of imported transport containers (amphorae) and African *terra sigillata* around the end of the 7th century provoked some uncertainty in our understanding of settlement changes. However, excavations at several rural (*e.g.* Rochiccella in eastern Sicily and Colmitella in the area of Agrigento) and urban sites (notably Cefalù, Catania and Taormina) have allowed us to identify a number of ceramic index fossils – in some cases with very characteristic forms and fabrics that make them easy to recognise, even when found as very small fragments (see, for example, Arcifa 2010; Rizzo *et al.* 2014).

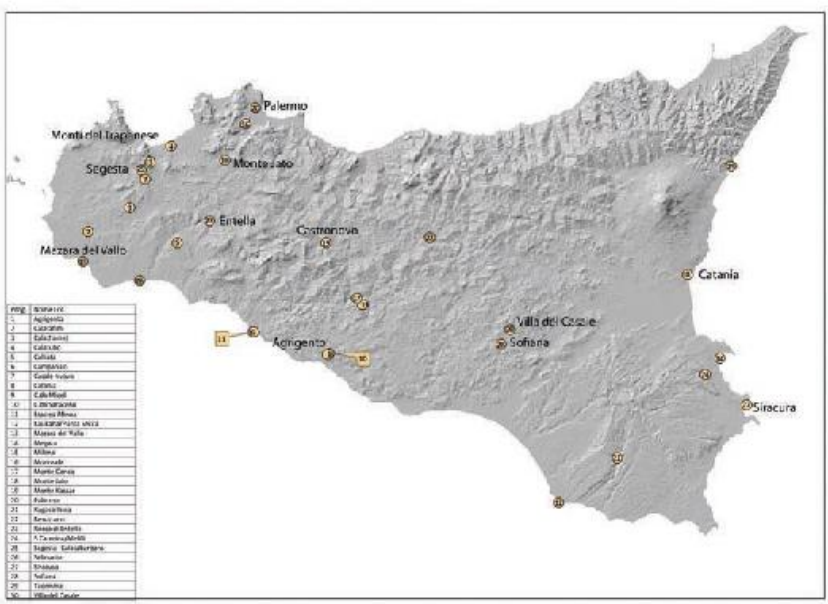

Figure 23.1. Map of Sicily with the localities mentioned in the text (Image: author).

In the 8th century, while previous settlement patterns appear to have persisted in eastern Sicily (Cacciaguerra 2014), elsewhere the landscape experienced a further drastic reduction in settlement numbers; however, these abandonments were not accompanied by any

sizeable and/or concentrated reoccupation of elevated sites. This could presumably indicate levels of depopulation. However, it seems evident that some of the largest undefended villages of the 6th and 7th centuries continued into this period in forms that were by no means fragile like Colmitella and Sofiana – to be discussed shortly. One phenomenon that has recently emerged from field surveys undertaken in the environs of Agrigento (Zambito 2013) and around Entella (Corretti *et al.* 2014) and Sofiana (Vaccaro 2013b) is the proliferation of very small sites (covering only a few hundred square metres) in marginal agricultural lands – areas better suited for pasture – and not in particularly protected zones. These sites, moreover, appear on current evidence to have been occupied only in the Early Middle Ages, although, so far, none have been excavated and so we cannot be certain if their roots are older or to what specific historical phase they are linked (late Byzantine? early Islamic?).

The late Byzantine period, especially the later 7th and earlier 8th centuries, has been proposed as the most likely phase when various types of fortresses were constructed, as a result of the creation of the Byzantine *thema* (= military province) of Sicily and in response to increasingly frequent and more concerted attacks by Muslim raiders. The major fortification of Monte Kassar (1030 m) in Castronovo (Figs 23.2–23.5; see also below), which encloses a vast area of around 90 hectares, indeed appears to date to precisely this period. Kassar was a very costly fortification, clearly a public undertaking and one established over what was largely an uninhabited site. At present, the key fact regarding this huge fortified complex is that it does not appear to have lasted very long: most likely it was abandoned following the Islamic conquest of the area in 857–858 or, at most, was frequented only very sporadically after that date. Noticeably, only a limited part of the 90 ha was settled. However, as discussed below, in the environs of Monte Kassar, the large site identifiable around the current Casale San Pietro features no evident settlement gaps between the late Roman and Norman periods (4th–12th centuries).

It is by no means clear how common fortified sites like Byzantine Kassar were in Sicily. Certainly, this instance denotes a primarily military installation but one which, when the need arose, could offer refuge to local population groups. But its impact on surrounding rural settlement did not apparently last long. Other fortifications of late

Byzantine date seem of a somewhat different nature. Thus the site on the top of Monte Conca (437 m) in Central Sicily was much smaller in extent, much less built up, but with an unmistakably military character. The site of Milocca, located at the foot of the mountain, comparable to Casale San Pietro, clearly shows continuous settlement from the late antique to medieval period. Lead *tesserae* discovered on Monte Conca are datable to the first Aghlabid occupation, and possibly indicate the payment of poll taxes by non-Muslims (*jizyah*) (Arcifa and Tommasello 2005). If so, we might argue that (at least part of) the autochthonous population continued to occupy the site into the early years of the Islamic conquest and settlement. The fortress of Selinunte, of rectangular plan with corner towers, was established over the area of the ancient acropolis and on top of the foundations of so-called Temples A and O. There are few clues to help us date the *kastron* with certainty and any interpretation must be revised in light of new data from the late antique settlement identified near one of the port areas of the ancient city (Molinari 2002; Lentini 2010).

The 9th century, which saw the landing of Islamic forces at Mazara in 827 and a protracted conquest that dragged on in the eastern parts of the island until the start of the 10th century, is the period least understood archaeologically. It would, however, appear that, in the case of some towns (most notably Syracuse, Catania and Palermo), we can speak of the persistence of unmistakably urban characteristics related to religious, administrative and economic functions. Those villages in accessible locations, noted above, and clusters of small sites which appear during this or in the previous century, show traces of occupation as well. In the hinterland of Syracuse, particular forms of troglodytism or cave-dwelling seemingly become more frequent, perhaps not intended as permanent occupations of rocky massifs but rather places of refuge or even secure, hidden grain stores (Cacciaguerra 2014). Whatever the fate of fortified sites like Kassar, it does not appear that the occupation of such elevated or cave sites became more numerous.

For the 10th century the most recent studies (for example, Arcifa and Bagnera 2014; Ardizzone *et al.* 2014) show how we can now recognise some of the ceramic index fossils for both halves of the century. This is particularly true for Palermo which, after its conquest

in 831, became increasingly important as an emiral seat, first dependent on the Aghlabids and subsequently on the Fatimids. During this century Palermo underwent an impressive development, as attested both in the literary sources and by the archaeology (Nef 2013; Bagnera 2013; and essays on the most recent discoveries here in Nef and Ardizzone 2014). Palermo, as the seat of the government and the Islamic aristocracies, played a primary role in the 'Islamisation' of Sicily, and the main changes in the island's material culture (including those associated with new kinds of agriculture) occurred here earlier than elsewhere. Palermo of the 10th century was taking shape as a polynuclear city, one still girded by the ancient Punic-Greek walls, but with a citadel erected in 937 by the Fatimids (the 'Khāliṣeh', still poorly understood structurally and materially) in the area near the port and the arsenal, and with vast and populous suburban quarters that long remained unenclosed by a curtain wall.

In the countryside, meanwhile, the 10th century (especially the second half) was unquestionably a time of significant demographic and economic growth, particularly in the central and western portions of the island. Evidence of growth can be seen in the numbers of sites, their surface areas and in the quantities of objects found. Development was perhaps focused on villages situated in the plains and on hills, but of variable areas and densities. One interesting aspect of this phase appears to be the disappearance of the small early medieval sites mentioned above. A further important change, above all after *c*. 950, is the permanent occupation or reoccupation of naturally protected settlements on elevated sites. These settlements, including the examples of Entella and Calathamet (see below), comprised fairly large inhabited areas but contained no seigneurial residences of any note. Fortified villages, thus, seemingly co-existed with undefended villages of different extensions and densities. The associated material culture of all these sites is particularly rich in high quality ceramics of wide variety, with imported pieces coming mainly from the workshops of Palermo. The houses in the sites are generally stone built with earth/clay bonding and tiled roofs; they feature several rooms and are arranged around courtyards or blind alleyways.

After the arrival of the Normans in the 11th century we begin to see important changes taking place, the most significant being the appearance of seigneurial residences on elevated protected sites, such

as Calathamet (Lesnes and Poisson 2013) and Castellaccio di Campofiorito (Graditi and Vassallo 2012), these endowed with towers built in stone bonded with lime mortar, churches and walled enclosures. However, no significant changes initially occurred to previous settlement patterns; in fact, only in the second half of the 12th century can we observe a notable series of abandonments of non-protected sites in all the areas that have been investigated systematically. It is from this period especially, and most prominently in western Sicily, that the settlement pattern came to be predominantly constituted by very large hilltop villages.

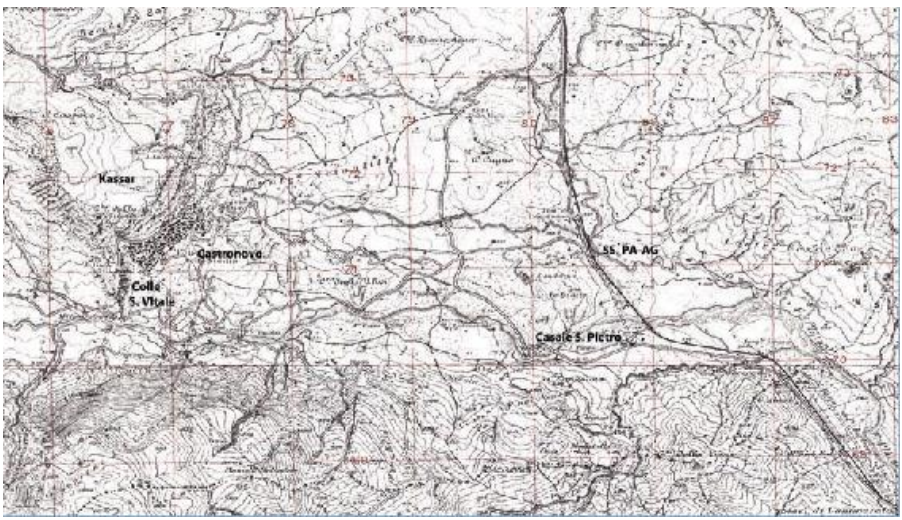

Figure 23.2. The area of Castronovo di Sicilia (Image: author).

Case Histories

In this section I detail relevant sites that have seen more intensive study and which may provide significant data for expanding our understanding of settlement phenomena in Byzantine to Norman Sicily.

First to note is a new project centred on the territory of Castronovo in western central Sicily (Figs 23.2–23.5). In September 2014 a joint team from York University (headed by Martin Carver) and the University of Rome Tor Vegata (led by Alessandra Molinari), in co-operation with the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Palermo resumed research in the Castronovo zone, building on and extending an earlier, fairly extensive study of this area's ancient and medieval

archaeological record (Vassallo 2007; 2009; 2010; Castrorao *et al.* 2015) and related written sources (Maurici 2000 with bibliography). Preliminary excavations had previously been carried out by the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Palermo at Monte Kassar, Colle di San Vitale (located above the modern town) and in the church of Casale San Pietro (Villa 1997; Vassallo 2009). The current research project aims to study the range of transformations that occurred between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages in a territory in the heartland of Sicily and one traversed by major N–S and E–W roadways. It analyses not only settlement dynamics but also social, economic and cultural practices identifiable through changes in domestic structures, food supply, funerary customs, religious beliefs, agriculture and livestock practice, and exchange networks.

A core early focus has been the vast summit of Monte Kassar and the area of Casale San Pietro which, along with Colle di San Vitale (displaying phases between the 12th and 18th centuries), are the most complex sites in the territory. On Monte Kassar magnetometry survey was undertaken in four different areas and two different excavations made (Fig. 23.3). In the area of Casale San Pietro intensive intra-site surveys commenced with a complete collection of finds in 10 × 10 m squares, in a field of around one hectare, located west of the present-day buildings; magnetometry was also used here. Finally, an exploratory trench investigated a peripheral zone of the site which is characterised by alluvial layers; it uncovered also two child burials containing grave goods that date from the 6th and 7th centuries. Although our excavations are at an early stage, by drawing on results from the previous studies, interesting data and considerations already emerge. Firstly, between the 7th and 8th centuries the zone appears to have experienced a significant reduction in the number of settlements; however, the area around present-day Casale San Pietro, thought to overlie one of the *stationes* along the *cursus publicus* between Palermo and Agrigento, has yielded surface finds of early medieval date as well as many finds from the early and late Islamic period. Secondly, also between the 7th and 8th centuries, the site on the plain seemingly co-existed with the large fortified complex established on Monte Kassar (see Fig. 23.3). As noted above, this was an impressive defended site, especially for the period of construction: the defensive wall runs for nearly 2 km; it is built entirely in stone with lime-mortar; it features

11 towers and perhaps two gates; and in some sections an outer wall is also recognisable. As previously suggested by Vassallo (2009), the defensive curtain can be seen to have been built by different groups of workers, yet was conceived and executed as a single plan. This walled perimeter enclosed the entire summit of the mountain, meaning that the fortified area, covering *c*. 90 hectares, contained extensive cultivable spaces also suitable for pasture.

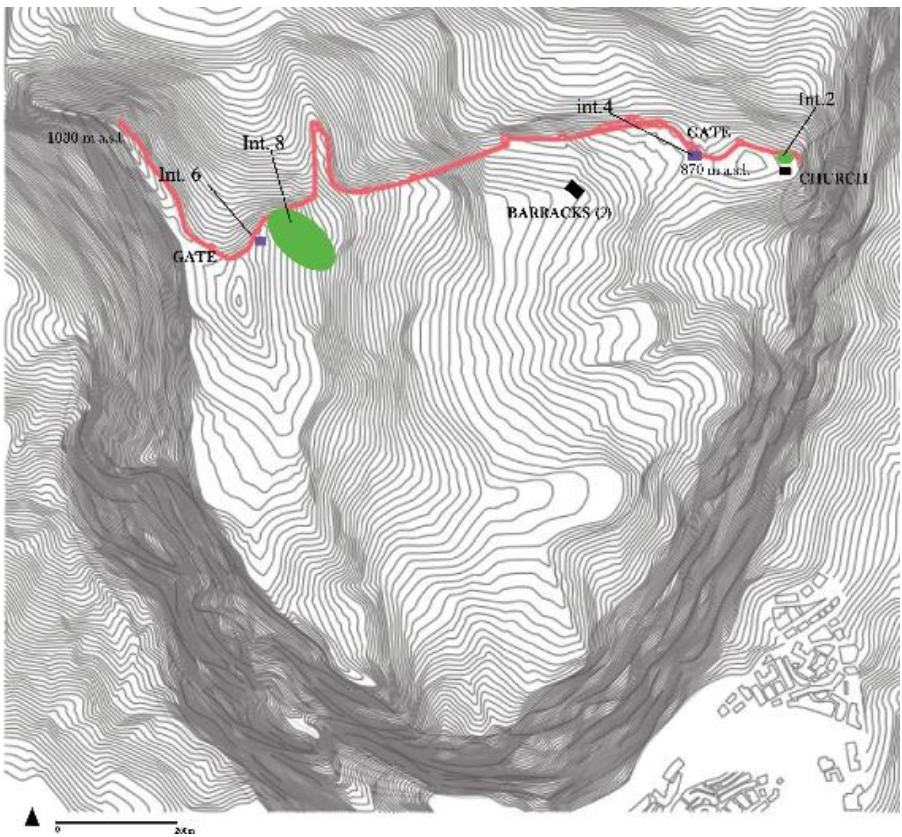

Figure 23.3. Mount Kassar: general plan showing the 2014 interventions (Plan: Nicoletta Giannini).

But when exactly was this major fortification wall erected and from when and for how long was the complex occupied and exploited? Excavation of an early 8th-century dwelling (Fig. 23.4; see also below) that was built against the inside face of the defences and which seems roughly contemporary (i.e. not much later in date) suggests that the circuit wall was constructed towards the end of the 7th century – coinciding therefore with the documented creation of the Byzantine *thema* in Sicily (Nichanian and Prigent 2003). From the

surface finds on Monte Kassar, the enclosed area (apart from an Archaic phase that ended in the 5th century BC) was frequented across the 8th century. While it remains to be determined if the site continued to be occupied into the 9th century, certainly no 10th-century ceramics have been found. Interestingly, however, some prior activity is evident, albeit based on finds from a very limited area of the site (in the vicinity of a small church) datable to the 5th–6th centuries (Castrorao *et al.* 2015).

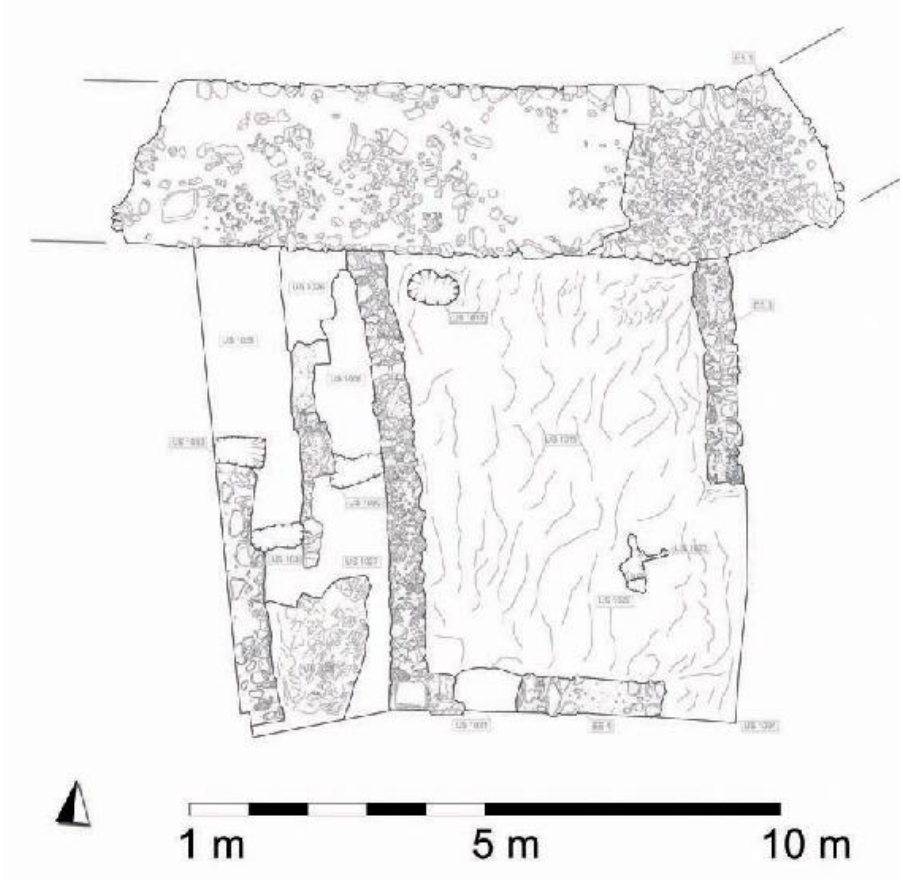

Figure 23.4. Mount Kassar: the 'House of the soldier' (Plan: Fabio Giovannini).

It will of course be crucial to determine the nature and intensity of occupation inside the Byzantine fortification during its main phase. Based on the distribution of surface materials, a wide band of *c.* 10 m appears to have been inhabited in the space immediately behind the walls, probably in dwellings that were of the same type as those excavated in our first campaign (see below). Moreover, in particularly

strategic areas of the site, notably near the main gates and in the more accessible point of the mountain, some large buildings up to 30 m long have been identified through magnetometry (Fig. 23.3, int. 8) or through partial previous excavation – can these be interpreted as barracks or granaries? The building that was mistakenly identified in the early 20th century as a temple, situated on a rise opposite the main gate, was only cursorily investigated in the 1980s and yielded ceramics of the late 7th and 8th centuries. Finally, of great interest is the dwelling which saw full excavation during our first campaign (Fig. 23.3, int. 6; Fig. 23.4). Of *c*. 6 × 8 m, this was built against the internal face of the fortification wall with earth-bonded and internally plastered stone walls; the floor was formed by the part-levelled bedrock. Below the house's collapsed roof were found fragments of glass chalices, two glass necklace beads, ceramics and metal objects, notably a belt buckle of so-called Ippona type (Fig. 23.5). Combined, these objects denote a rather elevated social status, certainly not a peasant family, although there are evidently objects used by both men and women. After the creation of the *thema*, the transformation of the Byzantine army into a resident standing army (as discussed by Haldon 2010) enables us to interpret, hypothetically, such a dwelling as the family home of one of the garrison's commanders.

Thus, these major fortifications, which arose entirely by design of the Byzantine State in the very heart of Sicily in conjunction with the establishment of the *thema*, seem not to have contained many occupants. The summit area of Monte Kassar with its 90 hectares must have featured some large empty spaces that could have formed pasture for animal grazing and, in times of threat, afforded refuge space to the peasants and other groups living in the valley below. At least some of these people must have resided in the area of Casale San Pietro, which was wholly undefended and accessible. Ibn al-Athīr (cf. BAS, I, 378–379) reports that when qaṣr al ğadid (the new castle) – which probably corresponds to the site of Monte Kassar – surrendered to Muslim troops in 857–858, the terms of surrender were that 200 persons should be allowed to go free. The commander al-Abbas accepted the terms but then sold all the other occupants into slavery. If the figures given by this source are to be believed, then the fort surely contained many more than the 200 people who were allowed to leave. However, since the reference does not specify whether those

freed were only women and children, we can make no plausible estimate of the total number of occupants and soldiery at the time. Fortified sites with features not dissimilar to Monte Kassar have been excavated in Italy, notably Sant'Antonino di Perti in Liguria (6th–7th century) (Mannoni and Murialdo 2001) and Monte Barro in Lombardy (5th–6th century) (Brogiolo 2014).

Figure 23.5. Mount Kassar: the Byzantine belt buckle (Image: Claudio Mangiaracina).

The site of Segesta (Fig. 23.6), situated in the province of Trapani, has been the focus of intensive excavation campaigns, particularly in the 1990s, by different Italian teams (for Segesta's late antique phases, see Facella 2013; for the medieval, see Molinari 1997). Furthermore, a systematic survey was conducted on the area of the present-day town of Calatafimi (Molinari and Neri 2004), of which Segesta is part. The Scuola Normale di Pisa is continuing to investigate the area of the ancient agorà. The ancient city, well known for its theatre and Doric temple, was highly 'Hellenised' and occupied the entire massif of Monte Barbaro, with its two peaks. Like other classical cities located in the interior of Sicily, Segesta endured a serious crisis in the Roman period and was in fact completely abandoned during the course of the 3rd century AD. However, the most recent excavations have identified late antique/early medieval phases, when, between the 5th and 7th centuries, the city's extensive ruins saw some re-occupation. Based on all the data collected over the years, this late antique site may be designated as a *vicus*, co-existing with much larger villages at *Acquae Segestanae* and Contrada Rosignolo, which were situated in valley bottoms and along major roadways. The Segesta *vicus* may have been endowed with a small tower, perhaps a watchtower (Molinari 1997, 51–56). After the 7th century, Segesta was again abandoned and remained so until the mid-12th century when it was extensively resettled by a Muslim population. *Acquae Segestanae*, by contrast, seems to have continued through the early medieval period until a hilltop settlement sprang up on the height above it in the late 10th century; this naturally defensible site is mentioned by several written sources of Norman date as active by *c*. 1000, designated by the name Calathamet (the 'Castle of the Baths') (Lesnes and Poisson 2013).

Entella, situated at the heart of the interior region of Belice, has been investigated over a number of years by the Scuola Normale di Pisa which also conducted systematic surveys in the surrounding territory (for a summary of the medieval phases and studies in the territory, see Coretti *et al.* 2010 and 2014). This former ancient city occupied an extensive plateau. But Roman Entella was already abandoned in the 1st century AD and, as far as we can determine today, re-occupied only in the second half of the 10th century. In its territory late antique and early medieval sites have been identified

which are in keeping with the dynamics described above.

Another notable ancient city, Iato, located on top of an imposing massif overlooking its territory, shows the sequences comparable to Segesta and Entella. Results of a continuous series of excavations conducted since 1971 by the University of Zurich indicate the presence of only sporadic materials (a few coins and belt buckles from the 7th to 9th centuries) and no structures that can be associated with the Byzantine period, whereas more substantial phases of settlement are datable to between the 10th century and the first half of the 13th (Isler 1995; 2000). The surrounding territory has been investigated by different teams (most recently, Alfano and Sacco 2014). Even if there was a considerable contraction in the number of sites in the 8th and 9th centuries, some open settlements saw some level of continued frequentation during the early medieval period, while from the 10th century on, the number and extent of open sites increase sharply. The dramatic break in terms of loss of sites would appear to have occurred everywhere around the mid-13th century.

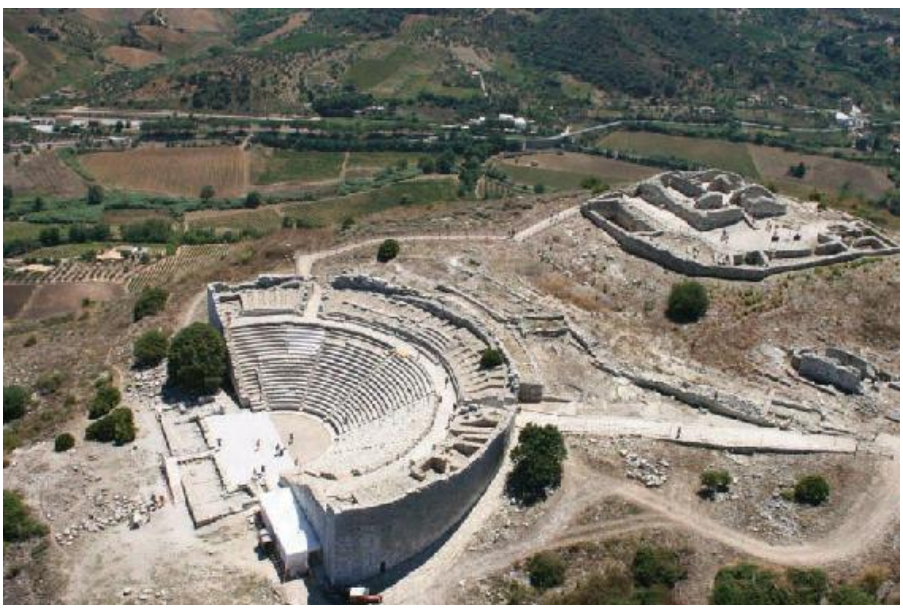

Figure 23.6. Segesta from the air: the Hellenistic theatre, the castle, the Islamic houses and the church (Photo: Gianni Gervasi).

The rescue excavation in Contrada Colmitella near Agrigento, conducted by the Soprintendenza of Agrigento (Rizzo *et al.* 2012; 2014) has given us a coherent picture of what was mostly a peasant

settlement, although it perhaps also had administrative or fiscal functions. Showing Byzantine, Islamic and Norman phases, the site is characterised by two distinct areas: one containing productive structures (mainly agricultural), houses and hearths; the other featuring a concentration of granary pits (more than 80), mostly rather small and thus suited for single family storage. Both areas appear to have been continuously occupied for at least six centuries (6th–12th). The whole village and especially the area with the silos remained unfortified throughout.

Research in the area of Monti del Trapanese has involved targeted archaeological surveys, environmental and pedological explorations as well as limited excavation at the site of Pizzo Monaco conducted by an Italian-Spanish team (Rotolo and Martin Civantos 2014). The site dynamics here resemble those already described, but the interpretation given to them is more structured and quite 'ideologically oriented'. A limited number of Byzantine sites seemingly continued into the Islamic period. Also in this zone between the 10th and 11th century, the number of settlements grew significantly: these were mostly villages and topographically these were arranged into 'clusters' composed of different smaller sized dwellings. The main village at Baida–Testa d'Acqua had an area of nearly 20 hectares. The only two fortified sites appear to have been closely connected to open villages. Although detailed investigation is at an early stage, according to its discoverers, during the 10th and 11th centuries Pizzo Monaco, located above the area of Baida–Testa d'Acqua, might have been a fortified granary (comprising many small cells) or in any case a collective fortification. Though the nature of Pizzo Monaco needs to be investigated more thoroughly, it seems quite different from the seigneurial fortress that rose near Baida in the 12th century. With the appearance of the Normans and contact with a completely different social system, the area's previous agricultural and settlement patterns initially persisted, but in time completely broke down.

In central-eastern Sicily excavations have resumed by two different teams at two very important late antique sites: the Villa del Casale near Piazza Armerina (Pensabene 2010) and the *vicus* of Sofiana (Vaccaro 2013a; 2013b) which lies less than 6 km in a straight line from Villa del Casale. These two sites have been considered a model for the settlement patterns of a late antique property with a luxurious,

mosaic-adorned villa as the *dominus'* residence on one side and the *vicus* of dependent *coloni* on the other. For Villa del Casale, new research is attempting to reconstruct, among other things, the diachrony of its occupation. Excavations from the 1950s in the central portion of the villa certainly destroyed the early medieval and medieval stratigraphy here. However, the study of the finds from previous excavations suggests the site was inhabited without interruption until the Norman period. In addition, old archaeological records, combined with a study of the few remaining post-antique walls, have led to the hypothesis that the area of the villa was fortified by a wall that made use of pre-existing structures including the aqueduct. Unfortunately, the entire perimeter of this wall cannot be reconstructed, and its chronology can only be roughly identified as post-antique and pre-Islamic. But we remain unclear regarding how the luxurious aristocratic residence of the 4th century was transformed into the populous Islamic village of the 10th–12th centuries and the nature of the settlement during the Early Middle Ages. The opening of new excavation areas, however, has given us a better picture of the Islamic village which also developed out beyond the area occupied by the late antique villa. This settlement was never fortified, and was arranged rather haphazardly into groups of dwellings composed of different rooms that opened onto courtyards or blind alleyways; there is good evidence for productive activities, especially of ceramics.

The site of Sofiana, which spans many periods, has been less damaged by past excavations than Villa del Casale, but did see investigations in the 1960s. New work here has included intra-site survey, geophysical examinations, test-pits plus more extensive excavations. These have revealed that *Philosofiana* in Late Antiquity was situated along a major roadway and comprised a large agro-town covering more than 21 hectares. Subsequently its total area dwindled to about 11 ha – still very large by early medieval standards. In addition, extra-site surveys have established that between the Byzantine and the early Islamic periods many very small sites emerged in the surrounding area. These can be identified as scattered peasant dwellings and farms, but ones nevertheless connected to the main centre. In the transition from Late Antiquity to early Middle Ages these dispersed dwellings, according to Vaccaro (2013b), may be

interpreted as a process of decentralisation, a loosening of control over local settlement which in the preceding period had been entirely concentrated in the main nucleus. At present, no traces have been found of fortifications during any of the phases identified. This site was also abandoned in the 13th century.

Concluding Remarks

The discussion above indicates that changes to settlement patterns in Sicily underwent several phases of marked acceleration. For the Early Middle Ages, the 8th century was certainly the first of these, especially in western Sicily. We can also point to the 10th century, and notably its second half, as a time of further transformation which coincides with the consolidation of Islamic control over the whole island. Finally, from the second half of the 12th century, the clash with the profoundly different social structures of the Norman invaders (which reached its dramatic culmination in the Swabian period in the first half of the 13th century) led to a decisive break with the previous settlement patterns (this latter period is discussed in detail in Molinari 2010).

During all these critical phases, reasons of defensive emergency are by no means the only possible explanation. In addition, the nature of the fortifications and the people who ordered their construction, as well as their linkages to surrounding peasant settlements appear to have been multiple and changing.

In the 8th century we have seen how a significant decrease in the number of existing settlements, mostly villages, was not sufficiently compensated for by the appearance of tiny, scattered dwellings and habitats, nor can we at present detect any shift of the population to naturally defended sites. For the moment, there is little evidence for the construction of many important fortifications like the ones on Monte Kassar near Castronovo. Their purely military character does not seem to have influenced the general settlement patterns of the environs. Thus, we can surmise that the reason for the disappearance of many settlements was a sharp demographic decline, not because of a change in the general patterns of settlement. Overall, the extent of militarisation that occurred across Sicily and involving the stationing of soldiers is, to say the least, a debated issue in spite of the fact that in around 740 CE Muslim raids were posing a mounting threat

(Chiarelli 2011, 13–19).

The point also needs to be made that this century was one of profound transformation in the balance of powers on the island and its social structures. First of all, a series of legislative provisions by the Byzantine emperors (starting with the creation of the *thema* towards the end of the 7th century) undermined the pervasive control of the Church of Rome. In fact, from the mid-8th century, revenues were no longer available to the Church from its vast Sicilian holdings (Pringent 2004; 2010). Another phenomenon is the transformation of the elites: the gradual extinction of the late Roman senatorial aristocracy and the rise of an elite made up of officials closely tied to the Byzantine Empire. This new aristocracy, whose ranks were probably boosted by immigration, was certainly far less rich than the old senatorial one and there is no sign here of the creation of proto-seigneurial forms of power. In brief, while the Byzantine State's defensive strategy in Sicily seems to have been concentrated in the main (chiefly coastal) urban centres and in a few fortresses in the interior, the rural population continued to live for the most part in those undefended or weakly defended sites which already in previous centuries had gradually assumed village forms. Future studies will nonetheless need to look at the social composition of these main nuclei (*e.g.* how stratified were they?) and their degree of autonomy from the new aristocracies. The not infrequent finds of 8th- and 9th-century coins (*e.g.* Vaccaro 2013a, 63–69) in rural settings may be connected with the need to pay tribute or rent also in money.

On the other hand, the frequent discovery of grain silos suited for single families, concentrated in the same village settings, but not necessarily in fortified positions (as in Contrada Colmitella), could be an indication of autonomous and shared control by the peasant communities of their own agricultural surplus. The continued usage of such groups of silos from the Byzantine to the Islamic periods may be equally significant. A final controversy relates to the nature of the small, scattered communities identified in the surveys and on which only early medieval ceramics have been found. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether these were indigenous peasants who were taking advantage of the reduced pressure from powerful landowners like the Church of Rome in the 8th century, or else immigrants in the wake of the Islamic conquest, who were engaged in, for example, pastoral

economies (cf. Zambito 2013).

The 9th century, when the defensive emergency seemed to be at its height (long Islamic conquest, inter-ethnic conflicts, weakness in the newly established Islamic state, resistance in the remaining Byzantine areas), is, generally speaking, too little understood physically. Peculiarly, there seems not to have been any proliferation of protected sites; in contrast, it is quite probable that a great fortress such as Monte Kassar was abandoned soon after the Muslim conquest.

What is very noticeable in the 10th century is, first of all, the increase in the number of new sites, the expansion of already existing ones and the disappearance of small scattered dwellings. Equally unmistakable is the prevalence of open villages into which the rural population was now organised. These data, along with the complexity of the material register (such as the quality and variety of the ceramics), clearly indicate demographic and economic growth in Sicily. According to some authors (*e.g.* Chiarelli 2011, 155–165), this demographic growth may have been due to high levels of immigration, especially from North Africa, either in successive waves or as constant flows. However, neither the archaeology nor a study of place names yet points to areas settled by particular tribal groups (cf. Nef 1998). The other phenomenon that is very evident in the 10th century, especially in its second half, is the permanent occupation or reoccupation of elevated sites, which has been documented, above all, by the discovery of multi-cellular houses arranged around courtyards or blind alleyways. Opposing theories have been put forward to account for the nature of these elevated settlements and the reasons for their creation, but more archaeological work is required. The first of these theories views them as the result of a decisive initiative by the Fatimid Caliphate, and especially the emirs of the Kalbite dynasty who governed in their name, to reorganise comprehensively rural settlement, notably by creating district capitals. Earlier in this paper we mentioned the rescript of Caliph al-Muʿizz; besides this, there is the important epigraph in Termini Imerese (see Giunta 2012) which mentions the construction of a building (fortified?) by Ja'far the Sicilian, a general of al-Muʿizz and founder of Cairo in Egypt. On the other hand, recent research in Monti del Trapanese tends to downplay the role of the State and interprets the occupation in the 10th and 11th centuries of the hilltop site of Pizzo Monaco above the

undefended village of Baida–Testa d'Acqua, as an autonomous initiative of Muslim peasant communities. Thus, Pizzo Monaco has been viewed as a fortified granary or a defensive enclosure. Excavations here have only just started; we await further data.

However, neither of the above theories is based on a clear picture of the topographic organisation of elevated sites in the Islamic era: no fortifications are known with any certainty to have been built or restored during this period, nor have any buildings been found designed specifically for military garrisons or for public authorities, nor congregational mosques (the one discovered in Segesta is later); moreover, the storage areas for cereals were also often located in unprotected areas. At present we can say that the *qal'ah* were certainly also extended settlements with civilian dwellings. In addition, we lack seigneurial types of residences of the forms built later in the Norman period.

In conclusion, while the Islamic society that developed on Sicily must certainly have been stratified, conditions were not generated for the establishment of the kind of seigneurial powers which in many parts of peninsular Italy gave rise to *incastellamento*. Between the 8th and 10th centuries, even during a time of transition from one domination to another, the historical and archaeological sources may indicate that a non-pervasive tributary State existed alongside rather structured peasant communities.

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